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Promotion and protection of the rights of children

Follow-up to the outcome of the special session of the General Assembly on children

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report assesses the steps taken in 2015 to achieve a world fit for children, highlighting the gaps in achievement as well as the strategic shifts necessary to achieve the unmet goals.

The report has been prepared in response to General Assembly resolution S-27/2, adopted at the twenty-seventh special session in 2002, and resolutions 58/282 and 61/272, in which the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to report regularly on progress made in implementing the Plan of Action included in the annex to the resolution entitled "A world fit for children".

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I. Introduction

1. At the special session of the General Assembly on children, held in in 2002, delegations from 190 countries adopted the document entitled "A world fit for children" (resolution S-27/2, annex), containing a Declaration and Plan of Action. In the resolution, Member States made a commitment to a time-bound set of goals for children and young people, with a particular focus on promoting healthy lives; providing quality education; protecting children against abuse, exploitation and violence; and combating HIV and AIDS. The present report provides the fourteenth update on progress made in follow-up to the special session.

2. In its resolution 65/1, Member States made a further commitment to accelerate progress towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals. Subsequently, during the high-level meeting held in 2014 to mark the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, Member States, United Nations agencies and their partners made a commitment to work together to ensure that every child is given a fair chance in life.

3. Significant and wide-ranging global accords affecting children were reached in 2015 on sustainable development (the Sustainable Development Goals); disaster risk reduction (the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030); climate change (the Paris Agreement); and financing for development (the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development). Furthermore, in 2016, the agreements on humanitarian issues achieved at the World Humanitarian Summit, held in May 2016, and those on urbanization expected to result from the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III), to be held in October 2016, will also contribute substantially to realizing the rights of the world's 2.3 billion children and increase the possibility of a fair chance in life for the most disadvantaged.

4. A child's chance to survive and thrive was much greater in 2015 than it was when the global community committed to the Millennium Development Goals in 2000. This was clearly recognized at the special focus session on equity of the Executive Board of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), held in June 2015. There is clear evidence of significant progress made between 2000 and 2015 in child survival, nutrition and primary school enrolment and in reduction in mother-to-child transmission of HIV, among other areas. The absolute number of children dying before their fifth birthday has fallen by more than half, from 12.7 million in 1990 to about 5.9 million in 2015. The percentage of underweight children under 5 years of age has declined from 25 per cent to 14 per cent over roughly the same period. However, stunting, now understood as a key marker of child undernutrition, still affects nearly a quarter of all children worldwide. Maternal mortality, though still stubbornly high, has decreased dramatically, from 532,000 deaths in 1990 to 303,000 in 2015. Over 6.2 million deaths from malaria were averted between 2000 and 2015, primarily among children under 5 years of age in sub-Saharan Africa. The number of out-of-school children of primary school age worldwide has fallen by almost half in 15 years, from 105 million in 1999 to an estimated 59 million in 2013. In 2015, 91 per cent of the global population used an improved drinking water source, compared with 76 per cent in 1990.

5. However, persistent and, in many cases, growing inequalities continue, depriving the poorest and most excluded children of services to which they are

entitled. In 2015, 2.4 billion people worldwide still lacked access to improved sanitation facilities and 946 million continued to practise open defecation. An estimated 36.9 million people were living with HIV in 2014, approximately 2.6 million of whom were children younger than 15 years of age. As documented in the previous report (A/70/265), data show that, although the proportion of adolescents with comprehensive and accurate knowledge about HIV has increased globally, 83 per cent of girls among the poorest wealth quintiles in sub-Saharan Africa still lack this information. Regarding child marriage, between approximately 1990 and 2010, there was a moderate reduction in the incidence of this practice, but the gap in global levels of child marriage between girls from the wealthiest and the poorest quintiles increased dramatically.

6. The scale and complexity of humanitarian crises continued to increase in 2015, with UNICEF and partners responding to 310 humanitarian situations of varying scales in 102 countries. Protracted conflicts affected a growing number of children and families while humanitarian situations increasingly spilled over borders into subregional displacement crises. In 2015, children made up one quarter of the 1 million refugees and migrants entering Europe from the Syrian Arab Republic and conflict zones in the Middle East and beyond. Climate change continues to pose a serious threat to children, with more than half a billion children living in areas at extremely high risk of flood and nearly 160 million in zones with high or extremely high risk of drought.

7. Protracted conflicts affected millions of children, including in the Central African Republic, Iraq, South Sudan, the Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen. Refugee and displacement crises, such as those in Burundi, Nigeria and the Middle East, exposed a growing number of children to severe food shortages, disease and abuse. In Europe, thousands of children on the move faced a number of challenges, including heightened protection risks. In Nepal, two devastating earthquakes struck, affecting the lives of more than a million children. In the Pacific Islands, climate change exacerbated the impacts of natural hazards, which quickly exceeded local coping capacities. The Ebola outbreak, which began in 2014 and continued into 2015, took a dramatic toll on Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone, affecting livelihoods, disrupting public services and threatening the progress achieved in recent years.

8. United Nations entities focused humanitarian action on saving lives, protecting children and addressing the underlying causes of vulnerability to crises. In 2015, these organizations continued to leverage the comparative advantage for humanitarian action of several successful strategies: having a field presence before, during and after emergencies; taking a multisectoral approach; leveraging the potential of a vast network of partners, including government, civil society and the private sector; and engaging in dedicated inter-agency collaboration with partners in the humanitarian system.

9. These strategies enabled the United Nations entities to support results for millions of children in a variety of contexts in 2015. Globally, nearly 25.5 million people accessed a sufficient quantity of water of appropriate quality for drinking, cooking and personal hygiene. Nearly 2 million children from 6 to 59 months of age with severe acute malnutrition benefited from therapeutic feeding programmes and 23 million children from 6 months to 15 years of age received measles vaccinations. More than 3.1 million children accessed psychosocial support and 7.5 million

school-age children were reached with formal and non-formal basic education. Some 16,600 women living with HIV continued antiretroviral therapy.

II. Follow-up to the General Assembly special session on children

A. Planning for children

10. In the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted in September 2015, Member States set forth an ambitious global plan of action that aims to eliminate extreme poverty and hunger, provide quality lifelong education for all, protect the planet and promote peaceful and inclusive societies. Although many of the 17 goals and 169 targets of the Sustainable Development Goals refer directly to children, all of the Goals are relevant to children's lives and, taken together, amount to a holistic approach to meeting children's needs, protecting them from harm, securing their environments and realizing their rights.

11. The Sustainable Development Goals build on commitments to children in the areas of poverty reduction, nutrition, health, education, water and sanitation and gender equality contained in the Millennium Development Goals. Crucially, the Sustainable Development Goals also include new commitments on, for example, child protection, early childhood education and reducing inequalities. Furthermore, the Goals reflect the recognition that meaningful, genuine and lasting engagement of children and young people is imperative for attaining sustainable results and galvanizing children as positive agents of change in their families and communities.

12. Member States are at various stages of adapting the global Goals to their respective domestic contexts. In many countries, the process entailed formal national launches, the establishment of steering committees for implementation and the development of road maps or action plans to facilitate the mainstreaming of the Goals into national and local development plans, strategies and priorities.

13. As Member States operationalize the 2030 Agenda, it is critical that the rights and well-being of children — in particular of the poorest and most vulnerable — remain at the centre of global, regional and subnational development plans, resource allocations and monitoring frameworks. "A world fit for children" guided reporting on children during the Millennium Development Goals era. Maintaining a continued focus on children in policymaking and budgeting for sustainable development remains essential for the Sustainable Development Goals era and beyond.

B. Promoting the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child

14. In 2015, two long-awaited ratifications of the Convention on the Rights of the Child — by Somalia and South Sudan — took place, bringing the total number of States parties to 196. The Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict had been ratified by 163 States as of May 2016. The Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography has been ratified by 173 States, while 27 States have ratified the third Optional Protocol to the Convention, on a communications procedure.

15. In 2015, the Committee on the Rights of the Child advanced its work on three general comments under discussion: on the rights of children in adolescence, on public spending to realize children's rights and on the rights of children in street situations. The Committee took the decision to collaborate with the Committee on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families on a joint general comment on the rights of children in situations of migration. The first two general comments are expected to be adopted in 2016. Preparation of the general comment on public spending was complemented by the annual day of discussion on child rights in the Human Rights Council, which in 2015 focused on better investment in the rights of the child.

C. Collaborating with partners and leveraging resources for children

16. A decline in aid flows during the last years of the twentieth century was reversed early in the current millennium, with aid growing to an all-time high in 2013. The value of total official development assistance has increased by 83 per cent in real terms since 2000. However, assistance to the poorest countries continued to fall, and was down 8 per cent in 2014 relative to 2013, when discounting for debt relief. Members of the Development Assistance Committee of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development provided a total of $131.6 billion in 2015, which represented an increase of 6.9 per cent in real terms since 2014. Net official development assistance represented 0.3 per cent of the gross national income of Committee members in 2015, on a par with 2014.

17. A number of recent partnerships and initiatives have advanced child rights. These include the Global Financing Facility in support of Every Woman, Every Child; the new UNITLIFE fund for fighting child malnutrition in Africa; the Global Partnership to End Violence against Children; and a new alliance with the World Bank Group around early childhood development that aims to make investments in the early years a global priority. The existing Global Programme Partnerships, including the Global Partnership for Education, the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria and Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, have focused on, among other areas, the development of new operational models and strategic frameworks, many of which are shifting to a closer alignment with the Sustainable Development Goals. UNICEF alone is currently engaged in 71 such global partnerships, with a governance role in 48 of them. Efforts to implement the Goals and current discussions around the humanitarian-development nexus have given impetus to the creation of new partnerships and associated funds, including for education in emergencies. A new Concessional Financing Facility has been created to deal with the human costs of the Syrian refugee crisis in middle-income countries such as Jordan and Lebanon.

D. Monitoring progress

18. When Heads of State assembled for the World Summit for Children in 1990, they had very limited information upon which to base targets to promote the survival, protection and development of children. Since then, there has been a revolution in the collection and use of robust, high-quality data on the situation of children around the world.

19. Much of the recent progress on data for children has been spurred by the rapid expansion and innovation of international household surveys, such as the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey. In the 21 years between the survey's inception in 1995 and 2016 over 300 such surveys have been undertaken in more than 100 countries, collecting data on a range of topics covering the situation of children and women. Data from the fifth round of these surveys, which commenced in 2013 and covered 42 countries, were used in the final assessment of the Millennium Development Goals and also formed the baselines for many of the Sustainable Developments Goals and targets. The sixth round will commence in the last quarter of 2016 and is expected to cover most of the Sustainable Development Goals indicators that require data collection through household sample surveys.

20. Systems for collecting real-time information and interaction have been scaled up dramatically in the last year. U-Report, the social media platform, now has more than 2.1 million active users in 20 countries. It was used during the Ebola response to obtain real-time information via Short Message Service (SMS), and is in continuous use by Governments and partners to create real-time information flows with young people. Open-source systems like T-Watoto in the United Republic of Tanzania and the Mobile Vital Records System (MobileVRS) in Uganda have dramatically raised rates of birth registration. For example, in Uganda, the rate rose from 37 per cent in 2013 to 60 per cent by the end of 2014.

21. As reported in 2015, the Monitoring Results for Equity System provides evidence for focused efforts on the most disadvantaged children. Evidence-gathering is receiving additional support from the guidance on frequent monitoring produced jointly in 2014 by United Nations agencies. A webinar featuring a panel of technical experts from UNICEF, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the World Food Programme on real-time monitoring was organized in 2015 under the "innovations" umbrella of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework. This webinar targeted United Nations country teams designing their Frameworks, reaching teams in 25 countries.

E. Participation and self-expression of children

22. Strengthening the participation of children in discussions and decisions relevant to their lives is an important component of the 2030 Agenda, with its emphasis on children as agents of change. Such efforts include promoting the meaningful and inclusive participation of children in programme and policy planning and implementation, and the monitoring of processes and results at school and at the community, subnational and national levels. In 2015, there was a 10 percentage-point increase in the number of countries having a functional mechanism at the local, subnational or national level for the participation of children in influencing development agendas and plans to benefit the most disadvantaged and marginalized.

23. Participation initiatives have taken various forms, such as establishing mechanisms through which children can engage directly with decision makers, or supporting children and adolescents to conduct research and advocacy to promote child rights. In Brazil, for example, adolescent citizenship groups were established to influence public policy relating to child rights, and 22,000 adolescents across 800 municipalities participated in the development of municipal action plans in line with local needs and priorities. In Indonesia and Nepal, media networks and

community radios provided space for young people to discuss the conditions of schools and social services. In Jordan, adolescents participated in local governance, influencing local government plans and contributing to holding local governments accountable for delivering services for children and adolescents.

24. Communication for development initiatives also demonstrated positive results by mobilizing adolescent networks using innovative approaches and platforms. For example, the UNICEF-supported Peace Messenger Clubs engaged 5,000 children who were associated with armed forces or groups in conflict-management training and participatory video and theatre, which strengthened their capacity as agents of peace. An evaluation of this initiative revealed that it had a significant impact on adolescents, who reported improved motivation (28 per cent), commitment to being a role model in daily life (20 per cent), active promotion of peace in the wider community (18 per cent), meaningful engagement in the Peace Club (16 per cent), increased tolerance (10 per cent), acceptance of others (10 per cent), increased inner peace (10 per cent), increased awareness (8 per cent) and better behaviour in school (8 per cent).

25. In Uganda, interventions included radio programmes, listenership groups and youth engagement in community dialogue and participatory theatre to address youth unemployment, marginalization and grievances relating to young people's roles in families and communities. Participating adolescents reported that they became more involved in constructive peer groups, community action, peer learning and collaboration with community leaders on issues relating to youth. Communication for development strategies to improve child participation include efforts to reduce discrimination against and the marginalization of groups of children. The positive impact of such efforts are illustrated in Montenegro, where a survey showed a marked increase in the percentage of the population accepting that a child with a disability should be able to attend the same class as their child (from 35 per cent in 2010 to 76 per cent in 2015).

26. In partnership with the private sector, an initiative was launched that focuses on empowering adolescents through skills-building and civic engagement. The initiative, undertaken in Indonesia, Montenegro, the Philippines, Zambia and Kosovo (under Security Council resolution 1244 (1999)), involved children in discussing issues critical to them, such as conflict, tolerance, disaster risk reduction, identity and diversity.

III. Progress in the four major goal areas

A. Promoting healthy lives

27. As reported in 2015, the under-five mortality rate and the absolute number of under-five deaths per year have fallen by more than half since 1990. This means that an average of 19,000 young lives have been saved every day. The average annual rate of reduction in under-five mortality more than doubled from the 1990s, when it was 1.8 per cent, to 3.9 per cent during the period 2000-2015. This accelerated progress has saved the lives of almost 100 million children below age 5 over the past two decades, including 24 million newborns.

28. Yet this achievement was not sufficient to meet the Millennium Development Goal target of a two-thirds reduction in under-five mortality between 1990 and 2015. During this period, 236 million children worldwide died before their fifth birthday. Sub-Saharan Africa continued to shoulder the greatest burden: in that region, 1 in 11 children still dies before age 5, nearly 15 times the average in high-income countries. Millions of children still lack access to quality care, immunizations and affordable life-saving commodities, such as antibiotics, oral rehydration salts and drugs to treat malaria. In 2013, pneumonia, diarrhoea and malaria accounted for about one third of all under-five deaths. Pneumonia alone was responsible for 13 per cent of all fatalities.

29. More innovative approaches are being scaled up to reach the poorest and most marginalized children with health interventions. For instance, more than two thirds of the countries in sub-Saharan Africa are now implementing integrated community case management for malaria, pneumonia and diarrhoea. Those programmes have proven to help save children's lives. However, one important intervention that is failing to reach many poor and marginalized children is birth registration. The coordination of health services with birth registration and data management systems remains inadequate in many countries, and will now require a more concerted effort and investment.

30. Neonatal deaths account for 44 per cent of all deaths of children under age 5. In 2015, just over half (52 per cent) of births in least developed countries took place with the help of a skilled health-care provider, up from 32 per cent in 2000. The global rate of women delivering with skilled attendance saw only a modest increase, from 57 per cent in 1990 to 71 per cent in 2015. The services of a skilled professional are crucial to reducing maternal and neonatal deaths. Skilled attendance at birth also provides immediate care to newborns and ensures that breastfeeding begins within minutes of birth. Evidence confirms that high-quality care around the time of birth, along with better care of small and sick babies, is the best approach for saving the lives of mothers and newborns and preventing stillbirths.

31. Countries can have such services in place by ensuring that the national health-sector plan prioritizes evidence-based interventions. Under the leadership of UNICEF and the World Health Organization, and with the support of partners, momentum was gained in the implementation of Every Newborn action plans to accelerate progress in newborn survival, with 16 out of 24 priority countries having finalized plans by the end of 2015.

32. A key part of saving lives is timely immunization. By the end of 2015, 123 countries had reached at least 90 per cent national coverage for measles and 130 countries for diphtheria/tetanus/pertussis immunization for children under 1 year of age. Among 59 target countries, 38 had eliminated maternal and neonatal tetanus as of the end of 2015. An additional 14 million women of reproductive age received tetanus vaccinations in seven countries. Fifteen countries have strengthened national immunization supply chain systems through the effective vaccine management approach.

33. Eradication of polio remains a global priority. By the end of 2015, 74 countries had introduced the inactivated polio vaccine into their routine immunization systems. The world is on track to achieve certified polio-free status for all countries by 2019, with the lowest-ever number of wild polio virus cases recorded. Nigeria

was declared polio-free in 2015, leaving only two endemic countries, Afghanistan and Pakistan, with their lowest-ever recorded numbers of polio cases.

34. Under the banner of the initiative A Promise Renewed, launched in 2012, 55 countries conducted annual reviews in 2015. Actions included sharpening national health strategies, announcing costed targets and mobilizing civil society around the initiative's goals. The number of countries with national scorecards to monitor progress and strengthen strategies to improve the health and well-being of women, newborns, children and adolescents increased from 44 in 2014 to 46 in 2015.

35. Global health partnerships, including the Partnership for Maternal, Newborn and Child Health, the Diarrhoea and Pneumonia Working Group, the Roll Back Malaria Partnership and Every Mother, Every Newborn, continue to drive policy change and action. In 2015, 64 of 75 priority countries for Countdown to 2015 had costed implementation plans for maternal, newborn and child health care, up from 52 in 2014. By the end of 2015, 51 countries had developed, budgeted and implemented a maternal, newborn and child health communications plan, up from 43 the year before.

36. Well-nourished children are healthier, more resistant to disease and more likely to survive. As they grow, they are more able to learn, becoming more productive and well equipped to participate in and contribute to the life of their communities. Yet, malnutrition in all its forms remains a persistent challenge. The estimated number of stunted children globally has declined from the 2010 baseline of 169 million to 159 million children in 2014. In 2014, just over half of all stunted children lived in Asia and over one third in Africa, where the number of stunted children is increasing.

37. While often associated with emergencies, the burden of wasting (acute malnutrition) remains high in many stable contexts. In 2014, an estimated 50 million children under age 5 suffered from wasting and 16 million from severe wasting. An estimated 68 per cent of all children experiencing wasting lived in Asia and almost 30 per cent in Africa. At the other end of the spectrum, 41 million children under age 5 were overweight in 2014, up from 31 million in 1990.

38. Globally, millions of children continue to suffer from micronutrient deficiencies and, consequently, poor growth, delayed cognitive development, weakened immunity, disability and disease, and even death. An estimated 29 per cent of children 6 to 59 months of age suffer from vitamin A deficiency in low- and middle-income settings. Furthermore, 43 per cent of preschool-age children and 29 per cent of women of reproductive age suffer from anaemia, often due to iron deficiency.

39. Improving nutrition is critical to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, and nutrition has been included in the indicator framework. In order to address the multiple nutrition challenges, which tend to affect the most disadvantaged, the global nutrition community continues to strive to create a more enabling environment for the scale-up of nutrition programmes. At the end of 2015, 56 countries had joined the Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) movement, compared with 48 at the start of the 2014. SUN supports multisectoral and coordinated actions to scale up evidence-based, costed nutrition plans.

40. The importance of breastfeeding was reconfirmed by new evidence that estimates that the lives of more than 800,000 children and 20,000 mothers can be saved every year by improving breastfeeding rates. Breastfeeding also contributes

crucially to brain development and the prevention of overweight and obesity. Yet only 39 per cent of infants under six months of age are breastfed exclusively.

41. Iodine deficiency is a common cause of preventable cognitive impairment. The introduction of adequately iodized salt into food chains has led to remarkable decreases in iodine deficiency worldwide. Currently, three quarters of households globally consume adequately iodized salt.

42. For women of childbearing age, fortifying commonly consumed cereal grains such as wheat flour, maize flour and rice is an important means to prevent birth defects and anaemia. Currently, 85 countries have legislation mandating fortification of at least one industrially milled cereal grain. For young children, home fortification using micronutrient powders is a more targeted approach currently operating in at least 50 countries worldwide. It is also a promising tool to address anaemia and improve diet quality.

43. In 2015, over 3 million children with severe acute malnutrition accessed treatment services in over 75 countries. While the number of children accessing treatment continues to increase, further work is required to scale up treatment services globally, alongside continued investments to prevent malnutrition through multisectoral, risk-informed programming.

44. In least developed countries, only 46 per cent of children receive complementary foods with adequate frequency. Only 20 per cent meet the criteria for the minimum dietary diversity and 11 per cent have a minimum acceptable diet. Only one third of the wealthiest in least developed countries are meeting the minimum requirement for dietary diversity among children aged from 6 to 23 months. Some 11.3 million children and pregnant and lactating women were supported with specific nutrition interventions in 2015.

45. In 2015, 17 million children in 64 countries were reached with school meals. School meals continued to be the primary safety net implemented in coordination with national Governments. School meals programmes have multiple benefits, including promoting and protecting access to education, specifically for girls, when combined with take-home rations. Furthermore, it has a nutrition objective by providing the appropriate micronutrients to children to support their learning capacity and cognitive development. A gathering of school meals practitioner networks of 23 African countries was held in 2015 to support knowledge exchange, research and study visits.

46. In order to better harmonize the work of the United Nations in nutrition and ensure that the United Nations system is "fit for purpose", the United Nations Global Nutrition Agenda was launched in 2015. This complements other activities, including the work of the United Nations Network for SUN and the Standing Committee on Nutrition.

47. Since 1990, 2.6 billion people have gained access to an improved drinking-water source and 2.1 billion have gained access to an improved sanitation facility through the collective efforts of stakeholders. Yet there were almost as many people without access to improved sanitation in 2015 (2,370,000,000) as in 1990 (2,450,000,000). Adequate sanitation coverage remains below 50 per cent in 47 countries. While the proportion of people practising open defecation fell from 24 per cent to 13 per cent during that period, it stills represents 946 million people.

The majority of those without sanitation access live in Asia, sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America and the Caribbean.

48. The Millennium Development Goals drinking-water target of halving the proportion of people without access was met globally, as well as nationally in 147 countries. However, least developed countries did not meet the target as a group, and neither did sub-Saharan Africa. In 2015, a total of 663 million people lacked access to an improved drinking-water source. Yet from 2000 to 2015, the importance of encouraging improved hygiene behaviours became entrenched in sector plans and gains were made in the proportion of people washing their hands with soap. Ensuring the safety of water supplies remained a challenge, with sustainability a major issue, especially in sub-Saharan Africa. Across the board, there continue to be low coverage rates of adequate water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) services in health-care facilities and schools.

49. Sustainable Development Goal 6 covers the whole water cycle and includes targets for universal access to drinking water as well as for sanitation and hygiene that are significantly more ambitious than those in the Millennium Development Goals. Extending basic services to populations that remain unserved and increasing the quality of existing services in line with global norms and standards for accessibility, availability, quality and affordability will require a dramatic change in rates of progress and a threefold increase in current levels of investment. It will also require developing new approaches that will work in urban areas and new partnerships with the private sector to leverage available resources for children. Discussions on financing for development suggest that while some low-income and fragile States remain dependent on external support, most of the additional financing is expected to come from domestic resources, including private-sector investments for WASH.

50. In 2014, early childhood development became a concrete part of the global development agenda. One of the biggest achievements globally in relation to early learning in 2015 was the successful advocacy for early childhood development and early learning/school readiness as a specific target with indicators in the Sustainable Development Goals. In 2015, 45 per cent of countries had suitable early learning curricula, safe and protective early learning centres and active parental and community engagement with early learning programmes, compared with 31 per cent in 2013. The percentage of countries in which early childhood care and education facilities were safe and supportive increased from 28 per cent in 2014 to 40 per cent in 2015.

51. In Central and Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States, support to Governments has been particularly effective, as the percentage of countries with effective early learning policies and quality early learning programmes increased from 50 per cent in 2013 to 86 per cent in 2015. There has also been significant progress in regions starting from a very low baseline. For example, in South Asia, 38 per cent of countries reported having effective early learning policies and quality early learning programmes in 2015, compared with only 14 per cent in 2013.

B. Providing quality education

52. In 2015, a transformative and expansive vision for education was adopted with the Sustainable Development Goals. Goal 4, on education, covers all levels, from pre-primary education to tertiary education to global citizenship, with equity and learning outcomes as central themes at all levels. The Goals represent a shift away from emphasizing access towards encompassing equity in access and quality of education and learning. This shift was precipitated by the reality that, for far too many children, quality education was unattainable.

53. Since 2000, significant progress has been made in education across all countries, especially in many low- and lower-middle-income countries. The number of children and adolescents who were out of school has fallen by almost half since 2000, with 34 million more children estimated to have attended school. Net enrolment ratios rose by at least 20 per cent from 1999 to 2012 in 17 countries, 11 of which were in sub-Saharan Africa.

54. Yet the world did not achieve the Millennium Development Goal target of universal primary education, and 59 million children (1 in 11) of primary school age are still out of school. Of these, 30 million live in sub-Saharan Africa and 10 million in South and West Asia. Including young adolescents, an estimated 124 million children have never started school or have dropped out. Inequalities in education have increased, with the heaviest burden shouldered by children who are disadvantaged by poverty, gender, conflict, ethnicity, child labour and disability. The world's poorest children are four times more likely to be out of school than the richest children.

55. Quality pre-primary education remains a key strategy to building the strong foundations children need in order to enter school at the right age, stay in school and thrive in learning. Today, an estimated 184 million children are enrolled in pre-primary education, an increase of nearly two thirds since 1999. Still, there is much progress to be made in expanding access to reach all children, with only one in five children in developing countries participating in pre-primary education. Children living in the poorest households are particularly disadvantaged, with up to 10 times less likelihood of attending some form of early childhood care and education than those in the richest households. Obstacles that continue to impede the implementation and scale-up of quality programmes include limited government investments in preschool education, low capacity and social demand for pre-primary education and lack of evidence-based alternative models for early learning.

56. Since 1999, the number of countries with fewer than 90 girls enrolled in primary school for every 100 boys decreased from 33 to 16. Yet gender disparity in primary education persists in almost one third of countries. Estimates show that twice as many girls as boys are expected never to enrol in school. In sub-Saharan Africa, 16.7 million girls are out of school, 9.3 million of whom will never enter a classroom. In South and West Asia, 80 per cent of out-of-school girls are unlikely to start school, compared with just 16 per cent of boys. Girls who live in conflict-affected countries are more than twice as likely to be out of school as their counterparts in countries not affected by conflict.

57. Globally, enrolment rates for lower-secondary schools increased from 71 per cent in 1999 to 85 per cent in 2012, with the greatest progress taking place in the region of East Asia and the Pacific. However, inequalities in transitioning from

primary to secondary school persist. Progress in closing the gender gap has been even slower in secondary education, with only about 48 per cent of countries expected to reach gender parity by 2015. Poverty and location often combine with gender to create deep inequalities within countries. If current trends continue, lower-secondary school completion in sub-Saharan Africa will not be achieved until 2111 for the poorest girls, compared with 2051 for the richest girls and 2090 for the poorest boys. In sub-Saharan Africa, while 75 per cent of girls enter primary school, only 8 per cent progress to and complete secondary school.

58. While the available data regarding children with disabilities are incomplete and of poor quality, there is evidence that these children make up one of the most marginalized groups and are commonly excluded from education opportunities. According to household surveys, about half of children with disabilities, on average, and up to 90 per cent in some countries in the developing world, do not go to school.

59. Ensuring quality education and learning for all remains one of the most critical elements of the development agenda today. An estimated 250 million children either do not make it to grade 4 or reach grade 4 without acquiring basic skills in reading, writing and math. These numbers show that significant growth in enrolment since 2000 has not been matched by quality and learning outcomes. Children from disadvantaged regions of poor countries are lagging behind even further. In these countries, the estimated percentage of children who cannot read at all, even after several years of schooling, ranges between 25 and 75 per cent. In East African countries, the learning level of children from poorer households is at least one year behind that of children from richer households.

60. Improving learning outcomes requires a concerted effort that fosters strong systems and quality learning environments through evidence-based policies and standards, backed by adequate resources. By 2015, evidence (from UNICEF-assisted countries) showed that 51 per cent of countries — an increase from 42 per cent in 2013 — had well-functioning student learning assessment systems, especially for the early grades.

61. Teachers have a big impact on children's learning, but in many countries, there is a continuing shortage of well-trained, motivated and supported teachers. According to recent estimates, 25.8 million teachers are needed across the world in order to provide every child with primary education by 2030. In one third of all countries, fewer than 75 per cent of teachers have been trained according to national standards and in low-income countries, teachers manage, on average, a classroom of 43 students.

62. The diversity of factors that impede access to quality learning opportunities for disadvantaged children means that education systems need to be innovative and responsive to the needs of all children. In many countries in which the language of instruction does not match the language spoken at home, ethnicity effectively acts as one of the major barriers to education. Efforts to overcome barriers to education in Latin America and the Caribbean and East Asia and the Pacific have shown a positive impact in learning outcomes, contributing to the growing evidence base demonstrating the effectiveness of these approaches. For young adolescents, life skills education and social emotional learning programmes have been critical in strengthening the well-being, physical health, participation and safety of girls and boys, particularly those from the most vulnerable communities.

63. A wide range of efforts is needed to improve the education outcomes for girls, including gender-sensitive strategies in education-sector plans, improvement in primary school retention and support for the transition from primary to secondary schools. Ensuring a safe, protective environment is also critical. Gender-based violence in and around schools is a significant barrier to education, especially for girls, adversely affecting their education experiences. Working with partners, United Nations agencies are supporting mechanisms to prevent and respond to gender-based violence in schools, as well as violence against children more broadly.

64. In 2015, conflicts, natural disasters and other crises affected 462 million children and youth in 35 countries, 75 million of whom had their education disrupted. It is estimated that by 2018, half the world's poor and the majority of its out-of-school children will live in fragile and conflict-affected contexts. Concerns relating to the increase in attacks on schools and children have also grown in recent years.

65. Yet education receives less than 2 per cent of humanitarian aid, which often comes too late and is insufficient to respond to the challenges presented. Given an estimated financing gap of $8.5 billion a year, the global education community launched Education Cannot Wait: A Fund for Education in Emergencies at the World Humanitarian Summit, held in Istanbul, Turkey, in May 2016. The fund is expected to play an instrumental role in delivering education in more effective ways, through better-coordinated responses to addressing the range of political, financial and operational challenges.

66. Insufficient financing for education, in terms of both domestic and external resources, remains a major obstacle to ensuring equitable and quality education for all children. While education relies primarily on domestic resources, the amount of resources devoted to education as a share of gross national product, on average, was only 4 per cent in low-income countries. Since 1999, the share of government expenditure on education has changed little, with a world average of 13.7 per cent. The repercussions of the global economic crisis and the lack of priority given to education by external donors have also resulted in a decrease of resources by 10 per cent since 2009, leaving an estimated funding gap of $39 billion a year. Given the diminishing resources, non-traditional financing for development has grown in importance, but more work is needed to apply it in the education sector.

67. More critical is the need for improved equity in the distribution of resources, so that the poor and disadvantaged children who would benefit most from education funding receive the greatest public support. In most countries, the opposite is true, with the wealthiest quintile of children receiving about 5-10 times more education resources — textbooks and teachers, for example — than the poorest quintile. In low-income countries, on average, 46 per cent of public education resources are allocated to educate the 10 per cent of students who are most educated; in lower-middle-income countries, the figure is 26 per cent and in upper-middle-income and high-income countries, it is 13 per cent.

C. Protecting against abuse, exploitation and violence

68. Considerable progress has been made in the area of child protection. In 2015, the births of more than 9.7 million children were registered in 54 countries, and 123 countries reported registration systems that are free, universal and continuous. Interventions on preventing armed violence reached more than 3.6 million children

and adolescents from 10 to 24 years old, compared with 2.2 million in 2014. More than 5.6 million children at risk were prevented from engaging in and/or were withdrawn from child labour through one or more education, social protection or child protection interventions in 30 countries; this represents a 24 per cent increase over 2014, when 4.5 million children were reached. More than 2,000 communities across 14 countries, covering 5 million people, declared the abandonment of female genital mutilation/cutting in 2015, compared with 1,000 communities across 9 countries in 2014. In terms of alternative care reform, such as deinstitutionalization, 61 countries reported having a policy in line with the Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children, three more than in 2014.

69. In 2015, 30 countries strengthened national plans or strategies to end child marriage, with 9 countries developing costed action plans (compared with 18 and 5, respectively, in 2014). The completion of the inception phase of the UNICEF-UNFPA Global Programme to Accelerate Action to End Child Marriage programme has the potential to reach directly, by the end of 2019, 2.5 million girls in 12 target countries who are at risk of child marriage or already in union. A partnership with the Global Social Service Workforce Alliance is continuing joint efforts to strengthen the social sector workforce as part of broader national child protection systems development.

70. In the area of online violence, the #WeProtect initiative was established to build the capacity of government, civil society and private-sector actors to tackle online sexual exploitation, spanning 17 core countries across six regions. As a result of global and national advocacy, in 2015 corporal punishment of children was prohibited in schools in 127 countries (122 in 2014).

71. Support to child protection systems development was provided in 122 countries through the development or implementation of legislation, policies and standards, alongside strengthening direct service provision. Increasingly, the focus is on building cross-sectoral linkages with health, education and social protection. At least 40 countries reported strengthened child protection systems in 2015 and at least 35 countries reported having child protection legislation consistent with or better than international standards.

72. During 2015, psychosocial interventions aided about 3.1 million girls and boys in 68 countries, including through the provision of child-friendly spaces and community- and school-based interventions. Almost 2 million girls, boys and women in 39 countries received elements of an expanded package of risk mitigation, prevention and response interventions around gender-based violence in emergencies. More than 2.8 million girls and boys in 15 countries received mine risk education. About 32,000 unaccompanied or separated children received appropriate alternative care services and at least 25 per cent of children in 30 crisis-affected countries were reunited with families and caregivers. Almost 10,000 children were released from armed forces or armed groups, with at least 70 per cent receiving reintegration assistance.

73. Concerning the massive population movements to Europe, with a large influx of child refugees (including unaccompanied and separated children) arriving from the Middle East and North Africa, child-friendly spaces were established in six reception facilities and transit locations, where, by the end of 2015, 81,000 children had benefited from emotional, stress management and psychosocial support, family reunification services, as well as recreational and basic education activities. A total

of 57,515 children at risk of sexual exploitation and abuse were reached through the provision of safe spaces and messaging about risks associated with trafficking in Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Serbia.

74. A significant breakthrough in combating the worrisome rise in reported abductions of children in fragile States and humanitarian situations came with the adoption of Security Council resolution 2225 (2015), which will hold to greater accountability parties to armed conflict that engage in patterns of abduction of children. UNICEF continues to support the ongoing implementation of action plans to prevent and end grave violations against children in armed conflict, with all seven remaining Governments concerned by the Children, Not Solders campaign having signed action plans.

D. Combating HIV and AIDS

75. Strategic investments in the response to HIV and AIDS continue to generate concrete results, fuelling optimism about ending the epidemic by 2030. A total of 36.9 million people worldwide are living with HIV, 2.6 million of whom are children under the age of 15. The number of new HIV infections is 35 per cent lower than in 2000 and the number of AIDS-related deaths has fallen by 42 per cent since the peak in 2004.

76. Twenty-one out of 22 priority countries for the Global Plan Towards the Elimination of New HIV Infections among Children by 2015 and Keeping Their Mothers Alive: 2011-2015 were implementing task-shifting to non-physician health-care providers of antiretroviral therapy, and in 11 out of 22 Global Plan priority countries, at least 80 per cent of antenatal care settings in targeted areas offered this therapy. In humanitarian situations, 59 per cent of targeted pregnant women living with HIV were receiving continuing treatment to prevent mother-to-child transmission of HIV, an increase from 54 per cent in 2014. To promote gender equality, 13 out of 38 priority Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) countries were supported to undertake a gender review of their HIV policy.

77. An important area of progress has been the increase in the proportion of pregnant women living with HIV who receive antiretroviral medicines to prevent mother-to-child transmission. The most effective antiretroviral treatment now reaches 73 per cent of pregnant women living with HIV in low- and middle-income countries and has prevented 1.3 million new infections among children since 2000.

78. Despite the continuing progress in combating HIV and AIDS, disparities and inequities persist for children under age 5, pregnant women, mothers and adolescents. At the end of 2015, only 31 per cent of infected children worldwide were receiving antiretroviral therapy compared with 42 per cent of infected adults. AIDS is now the leading cause of death among adolescents in Africa.

79. AIDS mortality and rising rates of HIV infection among adolescents are of significant concern. The key populations most at risk of HIV infection are girls, gay and bisexual adolescent boys, transgender adolescents, adolescents who inject drugs and children from 10 to 17 years of age who are exploited through the selling of sex. Many are never diagnosed because they fear legal and social repercussions if they seek information, enter prevention programmes or get tested. In 2015, UNICEF and UNAIDS launched the initiative All In to #EndAdolescentAIDS in Nairobi,

with the President of Kenya. This initiative aims to reduce new HIV infections among adolescents by 75 per cent, reduce adolescent AIDS deaths by 65 per cent and eliminate stigma and discrimination by 2020.

80. Addressing the needs of key adolescent populations continues to be a critical challenge and goal. Efforts to achieve sustained adolescent engagement and comprehensive knowledge and behaviour change need to be intensified.

IV. Ways forward

81. Responding effectively to the 2030 Agenda will require important shifts in what Governments and partners do and how they work. It will be necessary to pursue strategic partnerships across the United Nations system, the private sector and civil society to respond in an integrated way to other challenges to child well-being highlighted by the Agenda, including climate change, urbanization, displacement, the demographic transition and growing challenges in the second decade of life.

82. The multiple challenges faced by children demand innovative responses by many partners, including civil society and the private sector. Deepening engagement with the public in all country contexts will help to mobilize a diverse range of actors, in particular communities and movements, focused on serving the most disadvantaged children everywhere and helping to strengthen the accountability of Governments and United Nations partners for improved results for children.

83. The fifteenth anniversary of "A world fit for children" in 2017, following the adoption in 2015 of the Sustainable Development Goals and other major global agreements, will present an opportunity to review ways in which the post-2015 development agenda can pay particular attention to reducing inequality among children. The momentum achieved by the global agreements presents an opportunity to advance child well-being that cannot and must not be missed. Nothing less will do to achieve the powerful vision of "A world fit for children".

84. Despite the uncertain outlook, the potential for transformative change has never been greater. The world has a new commitment and the knowledge and means to overcome many of the critical obstacles that prevent children from realizing their potential and their rights. Without ambitious action on sustainable development, humanitarian assistance and climate change, the promise of progress brought about by new agreements risks becoming a tragedy for the world's youngest citizens. And without reaching the most disadvantaged children, the world will not be able to reach the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030.

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Review of the implementation of the recommendations and decisions adopted by the General Assembly at its tenth special session

Work of the Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters held its sixty-fifth session in Geneva from 27 to 29 January 2016 and its sixty-sixth session in New York from 29 June to 1 July 2016. During those sessions, it focused on the following agenda items: the challenges facing the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and its review process, with a particular focus on the Middle East: lessons learned from non-United Nations and regional processes; the relationship between sustainable development, security and arms control; and the emerging nexus between chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear threats, cybersecurity and terrorism.

With respect to the challenges facing the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and its review process, with a particular focus on the Middle East: lessons learned from non-United Nations and regional processes, the Board recommended that the review process concentrate on the delivery of actionable recommendations focused on the next five-year cycle. Members of the Board underlined the need to address some of the most pressing issues associated with nuclear weapons, non-proliferation and disarmament, including the following:

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(a) Agreement on a precise agenda on appropriate and specific steps in the field of nuclear disarmament. Such steps would include confidence-building and transparency measures aimed at reducing nuclear risks and promoting responsible nuclear policies, building upon the final document of the 2010 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT/CONF.2010/50 (Vol. I)) with its 64 action points, which all the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons should continue to support and implement;

(b) The lessons and consequences of non-compliance cases;

(c) The withdrawal of the Democratic Republic of Korea from the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and its repeated challenges to Security Council resolutions. Full compliance by all States Members of the United Nations with Council resolution 2270 (2016) should be encouraged. The Board's recommendations with regard to the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction are contained in paragraph 19 of the present report.

The Board recommended that the Secretary-General take the initiative to facilitate ratification, with a view to accelerating the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and provide all possible support for the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and to expand and strengthen the organization's monitoring work.

The Board recommended that the Secretary-General urge all countries that possess nuclear weapons, both recognized nuclear weapon States under the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and others, to display transparency and, as a first step, unilaterally release reports at the Conference on Disarmament stating the role of nuclear weapons in their national security policies, as well as the numbers and types of their nuclear weapons.

The Board recommended that the Secretary-General commission a study, implemented with the participation of the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR), on the development of long-range conventional weapons, including those using hypersonic technologies.

The Board recommended that the Secretary-General commission a United Nations-initiated study on a multilateral intermediate-range missile regime, and ensure that discussions in preparation for the study involve representatives of all the States that possess intermediate-range missiles.

The Board suggested that, at its sixty-seventh and sixty-eighth sessions, a review be conducted on the implementation of the recommendations made in the United Nations study on disarmament and non-proliferation education (A/57/124), taking into account the latest experience and new technologies in the area of education programmes, as well as the role of civil society organizations.

The Board engaged in a very active discussion on the second topic with regard to the relationship between sustainable development, security and arms control. In examining the linkages, the Board highlighted the fact that there were many other factors at play that could aggravate challenges to security and development, in particular, governance and livelihood issues. In this regard, the Board recommended the following:

(a) Encouraging the strengthening of existing international instruments such as the Arms Trade Treaty and the Protocol against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Their Parts and Components and Ammunition, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (Firearms Protocol);

(b) Establishing indicators for measurement, such as the marking of small arms. Strong emphasis should be placed upon tapping new technology for tracing, tracking, and identifying small arms;

(c) Building capacity in Member States, with the goal of detecting and preventing legal arms from being diverted towards illicit possession and use;

(d) Reinforcing mechanisms and procedures related to security sector reform and security sector governance and disarmament demobilization and reintegration;

(e) Building platforms, partnerships and coalitions that include civil society and the private sector to facilitate compliance with and implementation of the above goals.

Other important measures that the Board suggested be examined include the following:

(a) Voluntary measures, confidence-building, awareness-raising, reporting, information sharing and the collection, stockpiling and destruction of weapons;

(b) The development, where appropriate, of comprehensive programmes on armed violence prevention, integrated into development frameworks;

(c) The inclusion of national measures to regulate small arms and light weapons in longer-term peacebuilding strategies.

With respect to the emerging nexus between chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear threats, cybersecurity and terrorism, the Board recognized the importance of creating greater understanding and awareness of the potential threat of terrorists using cybermeans to cause death, destruction and disruption on a scale comparable to the use of chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear weapons. The Board suggested that the Secretary-General might wish to highlight the issue, including on the occasion of the general debate at the seventy-first session of the General Assembly and in his message to the Review Conference of the Parties to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction in November 2016.

The Board recommended that the topic remain on its agenda at least for the year to come. The Board suggested that, in addition to further exploration of the complexities of the issue as a whole, its work be focused on two specific issues:

(a) The threat of cyberattacks by terrorists on nuclear facilities;

(b) The potential role of cyberattacks in threatening biosecurity.

For its work in 2017, the Board proposed renaming the topic as: "The potential terrorist use of cybermeans to threaten nuclear security and biosecurity".

Serving as the Board of Trustees of UNIDIR, the Advisory Board approved the workplan and budget of the Institute for the period 2016-2017 and approved the submission to the General Assembly of the report of the Director of the Institute on the activities and financial status of UNIDIR. The Board of Trustees expressed its gratitude to the Director and staff of UNIDIR for successfully managing the Institute's projects. The Board also expressed its appreciation of the support by the Secretary-General for UNIDIR and hoped that he would continue to support ongoing efforts to secure its future.

I. Introduction

1. The Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters held its sixty-fifth session in Geneva from 27 to 29 January 2016 and its sixty-sixth session in New York from 29 June to 1 July 2016. The present report is submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 38/183 O. The report of the Director of the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR), approved by the Board serving as its Board of Trustees, has been submitted in document A/71/162.

2. Mely Caballero Anthony (Philippines) presided over both sessions in 2016.

3. The present report summarizes the deliberations of the Board during the two sessions and the specific recommendations it conveyed to the Secretary-General.

II. Substantive discussions and recommendations

A. Challenges facing the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and its review process, with a particular focus on the Middle East: lessons learned from non-United Nations and regional processes

4. At its sixty-fifth and sixty-sixth sessions, the Advisory Board held an in-depth discussion on the challenges facing the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and its review process, with a particular focus on the Middle East: lessons learned from non-United Nations and regional processes. To facilitate the discussion, the Secretariat circulated "food-for-thought" papers that had been prepared by Board members Wael al-Assad, Camille Grand and Vladimir Orlov. The Board was given a presentation by Randy Rydell from Mayors for Peace.

5. In view of the complex challenges facing the Treaty, the Board recognized that the interrelated nature of the processes could be further debated. In a first discussion among Board members, the value of lessons learned from non-United Nations and regional processes was recognized and it was concluded that that would be a good topic for in-depth work at a future session.

Urgent challenges facing the Treaty

6. The Board examined the Treaty review process in the light of the outcome of the 2015 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. The members of the Board expressed a shared concern that the review process had not only failed to deliver a consensus document but had also failed to engage in substantive debates on many relevant issues. Deliberations at the review conferences, the Board observed, had become more polarized, leading to deadlock at a time when nuclear challenges had become more onerous than at any other time since the end of the cold war.

7. The Board noted with great concern in that connection the recent nuclear and missile tests by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. The Board recognized that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea nuclear crisis, beyond its immediate regional security consequences, had global implications and posed a serious challenge to the non-proliferation regime. The Board underscored the importance of the full implementation by all Member States of Security Council resolution 2270

(2016). In spite of the latest developments, the Board believed that, should the Democratic People's Republic of Korea demonstrate a genuine willingness to put an end to its nuclear programme, a multilateral dialogue aimed at achieving a comprehensive resolution of the situation with regard to the country's nuclear programme should be pursued. Pending a comprehensive solution, it could aim at an interim agreement under which the Democratic People's Republic of Korea would desist from further nuclear tests, missile tests, further nuclear weapons production and fissile material production, and halt the proliferation of sensitive materials and technologies.

8. The Board underlined the need to move away from entrenched positions and to restore the search for consensus that had prevailed throughout the history of the Treaty. In that context, the Board noted that the Treaty was not only a non-proliferation and disarmament treaty but also a cornerstone of international security. The Board expressed concern that, if the current situation were to remain unchanged, the Treaty would be undermined and could lose relevance, with a risk of nuclear "anarchy".

9. Given the emergence of new nuclear challenges in the context of the significant unravelling of international security, the Board expressed the need to inject a clearer shared understanding of the strategic context into the discussions in order to avoid the widening gap between debates on the Treaty and the broader security environment. To that end, the Board suggested the allocation of an appropriate amount of time at the Preparatory Commission meetings and the review conference for such debates. The Board considered that that would be an opportunity for sharing different perspectives and concerns regarding the nuclear environment and for promoting a better understanding of the positions of different constituencies. The Board also suggested appointing the Chair of the next review conference and the Bureau much earlier in the process in order to facilitate early preparation for the Conference.

10. The Board expressed its concern that the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty had not entered into force because eight annex 2 States (China, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Egypt, India, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Israel, Pakistan and the United States of America) had yet to sign and/or ratify it. It would soon be 20 years since the Treaty was opened for signature. That should serve as an impetus for the countries that had not yet signed and/or ratified the Treaty to do so as soon as possible. Facilitating the ratifications and entry into force of the Treaty should be an important priority for the international community. In the meantime, it was also important to provide all possible support for the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization and to expand and strengthen the Organization's monitoring network.

11. With regard to the implementation of article VI of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, on the settlement of disputes, the Board recognized that the lack of recent progress in nuclear disarmament was frustrating. In the current challenging global security environment, further deep nuclear arms reductions seemed unrealistic in the short term. Some positive steps, however, were both desirable and feasible, and they would make it possible to move towards the goal of nuclear disarmament.

12. First, it should be noted that the Russian Federation and the United States were currently implementing the provisions of the Treaty between the United States of

America and the Russian Federation on Measures for the Further Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms. It was essential, in the Board's view, that both sides continue to diligently comply with that Treaty until it expired in 2021. They should pursue dialogue in order to lay the ground for a new treaty. That new treaty could also include limitations on deployed strategic systems (warheads and delivery vehicles), deployed and non-deployed launchers, and non-deployed nuclear warheads. Bilateral negotiations could also include other arms control issues, such as sea-based and air-based cruise missiles and missile defence systems.

13. Second, the Board had expressed concern that several States continued to ramp up their nuclear arsenals. Although the global nuclear weapons stockpile was shrinking, the process was not universal. Even some of the nuclear-weapon States that were parties to the Non-Proliferation Treaty did not publish their nuclear weapons figures, so the size of their stockpiles was difficult to assess. Meanwhile, nuclear-weapon States that remained outside the Treaty continued to increase their arsenals. All the countries that possessed nuclear weapons (both recognized nuclear weapon States under the Treaty and others) should display transparency and could, as a first step, unilaterally release official reports at the Conference on Disarmament, stating the role of nuclear weapons in their national security policy, as well as the numbers and types of their nuclear weapons.

14. Third, the development of long-range conventional weapons (including those using hypersonic technologies) could eventually upset strategic stability. As a first step towards preventing a new arms race, an international conference could be held by all the key actors to discuss the issue. The Office for Disarmament Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat should commission a study on that new issue, implemented with the participation of UNIDIR, so that the Board, on the basis of that analysis, could return to the issue at a later stage and make practical recommendations for arms control measures.

15. Fourth, the Treaty between the United States of America and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics on the Elimination of Their Intermediate and Shorter-Range Missiles (Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty) had played an important role in "keeping the lid" on the nuclear arms race in Europe. It remained an important element of strategic stability and European security. Nevertheless, the Treaty limited the military capability of the Russian Federation and the United States, but not of any other countries that possessed advanced land-based missile programmes. The elimination of intermediate and shorter-range missiles by all the countries that possessed nuclear weapons would help to reduce international tensions, especially in conflict-prone regions, and lay the foundations for a multilateral nuclear disarmament process. There were several initiatives in which it was proposed to address the issue by making the Treaty universal or negotiating new regional or global instruments, beyond the International Code of Conduct against Ballistic Missile Proliferation, which was a most important but limited confidence-building tool. It would be timely to arrange a study, initiated by the United Nations, on a multilateral intermediate-range missile regime, and to make sure that discussions in preparation for such a study involved representatives of all the States that possessed intermediate-range missiles. Such discussions would also have a stabilizing effect on the existing Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty, which needed to be preserved.

16. Finally, the Board believed that disarmament and non-proliferation education was key to support for nuclear disarmament goals by a new generation of policymakers, scholars and civil society actors. New initiatives in the field of nuclear non-proliferation education should be supported. Students from the States that were newcomers to the peaceful development of nuclear energy, and therefore more vulnerable to proliferation risks, should be specifically encouraged to participate.

17. The Board could play an important role in the development of education in the area of non-proliferation and disarmament. At its sixty-seventh and sixty-eighth sessions, the Board should conduct a review of the implementation of the recommendations made in the report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations study on disarmament and non-proliferation education (A/57/124), and, if necessary, arrange for a revision of the study, to take into account the latest experience and new technologies in the area of education programmes.

18. As the issue of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction had played a central role in the deliberations of the 2015 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, the Board decided to specifically examine that element of the topic as a matter of urgency.

19. The Board acknowledged that the failure of the 2015 Review Conference to adopt a final document had created a vacuum in the review process as well as in the implementation of the resolution on the Middle East of the 1995 Review and Extension Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. That vacuum also extended to the mechanism for holding a conference for all States in the region to begin the process for the creation of the zone, as endorsed by the 2010 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (see NPT/CONF.2010/50 (Vol. I), sect. IV, para. 7). The Board suggested that the Secretary-General was best placed to take the lead to encourage initiatives and ideas to bring all relevant parties back to the table. The Board recommended the following steps in that regard:

(a) The Secretary-General should call on the three depository States of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and co-sponsors of the 1995 resolution on the Middle East to discuss specific proposals for reinvigorating the process of creating a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction. The proposals could include the following points:

(i) UNIDIR could assist as a possible venue and as a secretariat, given its autonomy and independence while being part of the United Nations system;

(ii) The role of facilitator could be assigned to the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, after consultation with the co-conveners and the regional parties;

(iii) A consensus should be freely arrived at by the States in the region in an appropriate environment and within a structured framework facilitated by the co-conveners;

(iv) The role of the conveners and the facilitator should be identified. In that regard, the Board suggested that such a role should include the following:

a. Acting as guardians of the original mandate given in the 1995 Review and Extension Conference in its resolution on the Middle East and the 2010 Review Conference to ensure that the regional parties do not deviate from it;

b. Providing ideas and proposals to address any obstacles in the discussions;

c. Taking stock of progress at each meeting, and reporting to the Review Conference and its Preparatory Committee;

(b) The Secretary-General should call for consultations with the regional parties to secure consensus on the new structure for the consultations;

(c) The Secretary-General would issue an invitation, on his behalf and that of the three depository States as co-conveners, to all the States of the Middle East to resume consultations to prepare for the conference on the Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction, as prescribed by the 2010 Review Conference;

(d) The date for the consultations should be set as soon as possible.

Lessons learned from non-United Nations and regional processes

20. In view of the current sense of disorder and uncertainty about the future in many regions, including the Middle East, it was essential to better understand the obstacles to a cooperative multilateral process that could lead to the creation of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction. For that purpose, the Board recommended, to the extent that it was possible, to draw from lessons learned from non-United Nations and regional processes on confidence-building, arms control and disarmament. The successful creation of several zones free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction across the globe should inspire the efforts for a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction. Important lessons could be drawn regarding working methodologies, the instruments required and arrangements for a political framework.

21. Furthermore, the work of regional organizations, such as the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and the Arab League, had shown in various cases how multilateral initiatives could address and even overcome rivalries, exclusionary policies and brinkmanship through the promotion of dialogue, confidence-building and bridge-building.

22. The key to success lay in the mutual acceptance of common principles, the recognition of mutual concerns and interests, pragmatism and the political preparedness to engage in dialogue and cooperation across a large spectrum of relevant topics.

23. **The Board's recommendations to the Secretary-General were as follows:**

(a) **The Board recommended that the review process concentrate on the delivery of actionable recommendations focused on the following five-year cycle. In that regard, members of the Board underlined the need to address some of the most pressing issues associated with nuclear weapons, non-proliferation and disarmament, including, inter alia, the following:**

(i) Agreement on a precise agenda on the appropriate specific steps to be taken in the area of nuclear disarmament. Such steps would include confidence-building and transparency measures aimed at reducing nuclear risks and promoting responsible nuclear policies, building upon the final document of the 2010 Review Conference with its 64 action points, which all parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons should continue to support and to implement;

(ii) The lessons and consequences of non-compliance cases;

(iii) The precedent of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, a country that withdrew from the Treaty following an instance of non-compliance and pursued a nuclear weapons programme. This should be addressed specifically with a view to avoiding a repetition of such behaviour. Full compliance by all States Members of the United Nations with Security Council resolution 2270 (2016) should continue to be encouraged and monitored;

(b) The Board's recommendations on the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction are contained in paragraph 19 of the present report;

(c) The Board recommended that the Secretary-General take the initiative to facilitate ratification with a view to accelerating the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and provide all possible support for its Preparatory Commission and to expand and strengthen the organization's monitoring work;

(d) The Board recommended that the Secretary-General urge all countries that possess nuclear weapons (both recognized nuclear-weapon States under the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and others) to display transparency and unilaterally release official reports at the Conference on Disarmament, stating the role of nuclear weapons in their national security policies, as well as the numbers and types of their nuclear weapons. In that connection, the Board recommended that the Office for Disarmament Affairs, in collaboration with UNIDIR, conduct a study of the reports submitted by the nuclear-weapon States under the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons with a view to examining differences and gaps and suggesting ways of making them more consistent and useful;

(e) The Board recommended that the Secretary-General commission a study, to be implemented with the participation of UNIDIR, on the development of long-range conventional weapons, including those using hypersonic technologies;

(f) The Board recommended that the Secretary-General commission a study, to be initiated by the United Nations, on a multilateral intermediate-range missile regime, and ensure that discussions in preparation of the study involved representatives of all the States that possess intermediate-range missiles;

(g) The Board suggested that, at its sixty-seventh and sixty-eighth sessions, a review be conducted on the implementation of the recommendations made in the United Nations study on disarmament and non-proliferation

education (A/57/124), taking into account the latest experience and new technologies in the area of education programmes, as well as the role of civil society organizations.

B. The relationship between sustainable development, security and arms control

24. The Board had an in-depth discussion about the relationship between sustainable development, security and arms control. To facilitate the discussion, the Secretariat circulated food-for-thought papers that had been prepared by the following Board members: Mely Caballero Anthony, Rut Diamint, Eboe Hutchful and Fred Tanner. The Board was given a presentation by Daniel Prins from the Office for Disarmament Affairs.

25. The Board took note of the significance of the inclusion of peace, security and justice in the Sustainable Development Goals. Members of the Advisory Board considered that to be an important milestone in that it took account of the close interconnection between development and security. As noted in *The Global Burden of Armed Violence* (Geneva, 2008), armed conflict and armed violence erodes the social fabric of communities, sows fear and insecurity, destroys human and social capital, and impedes sustainable development and economic growth. This is particularly relevant to vulnerable groups and societies in conflict-ridden areas, where there is a proliferation of and easy access to armaments, and where there is an absence of accountable institutions and the rule of law.

26. The Board recognized the pivotal role that weapons played in a complex security environment which provided the conditions conducive to almost all forms of illicit trafficking of small arms and light weapons and where organized crime and extremist groups were present. The availability, proliferation and excessive accumulation of arms, the Board noted, was a contributor to armed violence and a serious impediment to the achievement of sustainable development in many countries.

27. In addition, international efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals must take into account critical issues such as emerging technologies and the role of excessive military expenditures relevant to development. The Board was of the opinion that the application of new technologies was essential for achieving sustainable development. However, the potential military applications of such technologies could have a negative impact on security and development. Therefore the military use of emerging technologies should be limited, and existing export control regimes might have to be reviewed in order not to hinder the achievement of the Goals. The relationship between sustainable development and security was also negatively affected by excessive military expenditures. In that context, full participation by all Member States in the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms and the United Nations report on military expenditures (see A/70/139) was critical for achieving the Goals.

28. The argument was also advanced that there was not necessarily a direct relationship between development and disarmament. In that context the Board encouraged revisiting the debate on security and development.

29. It was also emphasized that the illicit flows of arms needed to be addressed in the context of security sector governance and the effectiveness of State institutions in dealing with the potential diversion of arms and their illegal possession and use. Additionally, the Board drew attention to the negative impact of mines and unexploded ordinance on sustainable development in post-conflict areas and called for action to deal with that problem on an urgent basis.

30. The Board expressed concern about the wide-ranging impacts of explosive weapons and the ways in which they affected a number of central Sustainable Development Goals. The Board noted that progress towards the Goals was held back by the destruction of vital infrastructure caused by explosive force and its effect on the delivery of services.

31. **The Board's recommendations to the Secretary-General were as follows:**

(a) Highlighting the fact that there were many factors at play that could aggravate challenges to security and development, in particular, governance and livelihood issues, the Board recommended the following:

(i) Encouraging the strengthening of existing international instruments such as the Arms Trade Treaty and the Firearms Protocol;

(ii) Establishing indicators for measurement such as the marking of small arms. Strong emphasis should be placed upon tapping new technology for tracing, tracking, and identifying small arms;

(iii) Building capacity in Member States with the goal of detecting and preventing legal arms from being diverted towards illicit possession and use;

(iv) Reinforcing mechanisms and procedures related to security sector reform, security sector governance and disarmament, demobilization and reintegration;

(v) Building platforms, partnerships and coalitions that included civil society and the private sector to facilitate compliance with and the implementation of the above goals;

(b) Other important measures that the Board suggested be examined included the following:

(i) Voluntary measures, confidence-building, awareness-raising, reporting, information-sharing and the collection, stockpiling and destruction of weapons;

(ii) The development, where appropriate, of comprehensive programmes on armed violence prevention, programmes integrated into development frameworks;

(iii) The inclusion of national measures to regulate small arms and light weapons in longer-term peacebuilding strategies.

C. The emerging nexus between chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear threats, cybersecurity and terrorism

32. The Board welcomed the addition of the topic to its agenda, as it recognized that it had novel and complex implications for international peace and security that

deserved consideration by the Board. In view of the nature of the issues, the Board recognized that not all of its individual components, nor all of the dyadic relationships between them, could be considered in depth. That, the Board said, was partly due to time constraints but also due to the fact that some of the components were long-standing issues, identified and studied elsewhere.

33. The Board continued the discussion that it had begun at its January 2016 session to explore the many complexities of the nexus issue. The Board was given a presentation by Page Stoutland from the Nuclear Threat Initiative on the nexus, with a particular emphasis on nuclear security. It also considered a food-for-thought paper by Sung-joo Choi, as well as additional material provided by Trevor Findlay and Vicente Garrido Rebolledo.

34. Further thought should be given to institutionalizing the issue within the United Nations system in view of the fact that no single part of the machinery was currently responsible for considering the nexus issue. A multi-stakeholder approach was desirable. The United Nations itself, the International Atomic Energy Agency, the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons and the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1540 (2004) all had important roles to play in their respective domains. They should be afforded the necessary support and resources. The comprehensive review of the status of implementation of resolution 1540 (2004) being conducted in 2016 provided an important opportunity to enhance its implementation and to strengthen support for the Committee. It should take into account emerging trends in nuclear, chemical and biological security as well as the rapid advances in cybertechnology and communications that offered great benefits and opportunities but also increased the risk that non-State actors might misuse them.

35. It was noted that there was a lack of appropriate institutional capacity for considering and dealing with the terrorist cyberthreat to biosecurity. The Secretary-General's mechanism could be triggered only after an alleged attack had occurred. The Biological Weapons Convention lacked a verification and implementation body, apart from the small Implementation Support Unit in Geneva. The Review Conference of the States Parties to the Convention could be used as an opportunity to commence the discussion on the potential threat to biosecurity from the cyberterrorism nexus.

36. One issue identified as deserving further study was the need to provide capacity-building assistance, especially to developing countries, in countering the cyberthreat to critical infrastructure, especially that related to chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear threats. Mechanisms should be established for sharing information and best practices. An exemplar of that was the efforts of the international community to strengthen nuclear security.

37. **The Board made the following recommendations to the Secretary-General:**

(a) **Recognizing the importance of creating greater understanding and awareness of the potential threat of terrorists using cybermeans to cause death, destruction and disruption on a scale comparable to the use of chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear weapons, the Board suggested that the Secretary-General might wish to use his major presentations to highlight the issue, including during the general debate at the seventy-first session of the General Assembly and in his message to the Review Conference of the Parties**

to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction in November.

(b) The Board recommended that the nexus topic remain on its agenda for at least the coming year. The Board suggested that, in addition to further exploration of the complexities of the issue as a whole, its work be focused on two specific issues, on the basis of its identification of two of the most serious threats. These were:

(i) The threat of cyberattacks by terrorists on nuclear facilities;

(ii) The potential role of cybermeans in threatening biosecurity.

In order to focus its work the following year, the Board proposed renaming the topic as: "The potential terrorist use of cybermeans to threaten nuclear security and biosecurity".

III. Board of Trustees of the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research

38. The Board welcomed the fact that the situation facing UNIDIR had improved since its previous report. Over the previous year, thanks to the efforts of UNIDIR, the Board, the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs and Member States, important progress had been achieved. As a result of that cooperative effort, numerous long-standing problems facing UNIDIR had been resolved. The Institute had emerged from a long period of crisis as a more robust and stable entity.

39. There had been resolution or measurable improvement regarding nearly all issues highlighted in the previous year's report. UNIDIR had successfully made the transition to Umoja and was now fully embedded in and compliant with the administrative and financial processes of the United Nations. The required reserves of around $1 million had been set aside for existing liabilities in compliance with International Public Sector Accounting Standards requirements, thereby ensuring that UNIDIR could honour its contractual commitments.

40. The Stability Fund, a revolving capital fund established in 2015 (see A/70/186, para. 40), had proven its utility, permitting projects to address short-term liquidity and cashflow issues. As the liability reserves were held separately from the Stability Fund, full capitalization could be achieved for around $300,000, rather than $1 million, as originally estimated. The Fund was close to reaching that goal. The Board would periodically review the size of the Fund and, if necessary, make recommendations as to increasing the Fund target.

41. On matters related to human resources, the Board was pleased to note that the issue of non-standard employment contracts formerly given to some staff had been resolved. All staff were now on contracts in compliance with United Nations human resources policy.

42. The Board of Trustees reiterated its support for the recommendations of the independent institutional assessment conducted in January 2015 (see A/70/186, para. 44). In particular, the Board highlighted the recommendation that the irreducible core of the institutional structure comprised five positions. In that

regard, the Board welcomed the establishment of the position of Chief of Research in 2015, which would further strengthen research design and integrity.

43. On financial matters, the Board noted with satisfaction that earmarked funding for project activities continued to rise. That was an indicator of the value placed by funders on the quality of the work of UNIDIR and their willingness to invest in it.

44. While the period of crisis was now over, the remaining issue facing UNIDIR was how to address the growing gap between institutional (unearmarked) and project (earmarked) support. That was not a new issue; it had dogged the Institute since its establishment over 35 years before. However, as noted in previous reports, the gap between earmarked and unearmarked funding had become untenable. The Board recognized the Director's resource mobilization efforts, but also noted that the funding environment was not favourable for institutional funding. Donors had a strong and unwavering preference for funding activities, not the structural elements that supported them. The Board encouraged the Director and staff to continue their efforts to raise institutional funding, as one component of a sustainable package for institutional support.

45. Over several years, the strict cost-recovery model of UNIDIR for projects had strengthened the financial position of the Institute through the recovery of both direct and indirect costs on all activities. However, donors had clearly indicated that UNIDIR had reached a ceiling on project overheads and that any increase would dissuade further funding.

46. The Board noted with satisfaction that, following the adoption of General Assembly resolution 70/69 on the thirty-fifth anniversary of UNIDIR, a one-off increase in the regular budget subvention was expected for the biennium 2018-2019. The Board reiterated its previous conviction that the minimum institutional structure comprised five posts (see A/70/186, para. 44) and its recommendation that, in order to ensure the operational sustainability and independence of the Institute, the subvention should cover the costs of all the Institute's institutional staff (see para. 39).

47. The Board looked forward to the independent third-party assessment of UNIDIR, which would be carried out in early 2018, to be followed by a report of the Secretary-General. The Board expected that the sustainable and stable funding structure and operating model for the Institute outlined in the report of the Secretary-General would also address the need for an increased regular budget subvention.

48. In order to address the long-standing and growing gap between earmarked project funding and unearmarked funds provided for the institutional operations budget, the Board reiterated its previous recommendation that the subvention to the Institute be increased on a sustained basis so that the necessary institutional framework was in place to support the development, management, implementation, reporting and evaluation of project activities in conformity with United Nations rules and procedures.

IV. Future work

49. The members of the Advisory Board exchanged views on a number of possible topics for discussion at its 2016 sessions. Possible areas of future work included further examination of the potential terrorist use of cybermeans to threaten nuclear

security and biosecurity; the impact of emerging technologies on international security; and review and update of the 2002 United Nations study on disarmament and non-proliferation education (A/57/124), including the role of civil society organizations.

V. Conclusion

50. During its two sessions in 2016, the Board concluded deliberations on the three items on its agenda: the challenges facing the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and its review process with a particular focus on the Middle East: lessons learned from non-United Nations and regional processes; the relationship between sustainable development, security and arms control; and the emerging nexus between chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear threats, cybersecurity and terrorism. It provided a set of recommendations to the Secretary-General on each of those items. Serving as the Board of Trustees of UNIDIR, the Board reviewed the research activities of the Institute.

Annex

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Integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social and related fields

Social development: literacy for life: shaping future agendas

Literacy for life: shaping future agendas and education for democracy

Note by the Secretary-General

The Secretary-General hereby transmits the report of the Director-General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization on literacy for life: shaping future agendas, submitted in accordance with General Assembly resolution 69/141, and on education for democracy, in accordance with Assembly resolution 69/268.

* A/71/150.

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Report of the Director-General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization on literacy for life: shaping future agendas and on education for democracy

Summary

The present report is submitted in accordance with General Assembly resolution 69/141, in which the Assembly requested the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) to continue its coordinating and catalytic role in advancing literacy across the world, including in the context of the agenda for the period following the United Nations Literacy Decade, by developing Member States' capacities in the areas of policies, programme delivery and literacy assessments; scaling up literacy action for girls and women; reinforcing innovative models of literacy delivery through information and communications technology and other means; and expanding the knowledge base and monitoring and evaluation, as well as advocating literacy on the global agenda and ensuring synergies between different actions, through multi-stakeholder partnerships and networks and other means. The Assembly requested the Secretary-General, in cooperation with the Director-General of UNESCO, to submit to the Assembly at its seventy-first session a report on the implementation of the resolution.

The world community recognized literacy as an "indispensable foundation for independent learning" in Education 2030: Incheon Declaration and Framework for Action: Towards inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning for all and subsequently in General Assembly resolution 70/1, entitled "Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development". One goal of the world community is universal literacy. Target 4.6 of the Sustainable Development Goals reflects the ambitious and transformative agenda for literacy action in the next 15 years. UNESCO continues to play a catalytic and coordinating role by supporting Member States in their efforts to create a more literate world, as well as ensuring synergies between different actions, in particular through the establishment of the Global Alliance for Literacy within the framework of lifelong learning.

The last section of the report includes information on activities carried out to promote education for democracy, pursuant to General Assembly resolution 69/268.

I. Introduction

1. The General Assembly, in its resolution 69/141, expressed its conviction that "literacy is crucial to the acquisition by every child, young person and adult of the essential life skills that will enable them to address the challenges that they may face in life and represents an essential condition of lifelong learning, which is an indispensable means for effective participation in knowledge societies and economies of the twenty-first century". Literacy empowers individuals and forms an integral part of transformative learning for realizing more inclusive, just and sustainable societies.

2. Despite steady progress made over the past years, the General Assembly noted with deep concern the scale of literacy challenges that lie ahead. Today, there are still at least 757 million adults who lack basic literacy skills, of whom one third are women.[1] In 2013, an estimated 124 million children and adolescents worldwide were out of school.[2] Of the world's 650 million primary-school-age children, at least 250 million children, many of whom are from disadvantaged backgrounds, are not acquiring basic skills in reading and mathematics.[3] These challenges are distributed in an inequitable manner across countries and populations. For instance, more than half of all illiterate adults reside in South and West Asia (51 per cent), while 25 per cent of them live in sub-Saharan Africa, 12 per cent in East Asia and the Pacific, 7 per cent in the Arab States and 4 per cent in Latin America and the Caribbean. The gender gap in education persists, and the literacy rate among adults with disabilities is as low as 3 per cent in some countries.

3. The General Assembly recognized the importance of national efforts and encouraged Member States and their partners, including specialized agencies and other relevant organizations of the United Nations system, donors, civil society and the private sector, to sustain and expand the gains achieved during the United Nations Literacy Decade (2003-2012) by improving the integration of literacy into sector-wide and multisectoral education and development strategies, expanding the provision of quality literacy programmes, enhancing education systems to provide quality basic education through schooling, enriching literate environments to allow people to acquire, use and advance literacy skills and promoting literacy for women and girls, as well as for marginalized groups, for their empowerment and inclusion in societies. The Assembly also called upon all governments to build a robust knowledge and technical base through improved literacy monitoring, assessment and research, including the development of reliable measures of literacy, and to generate data that are comparable across time and disaggregated by age, sex, disability, socioeconomic status, geographical location (urban/rural areas) and other relevant factors.

4. In the same resolution, the General Assembly requested UNESCO to continue its coordinating and catalytic role in advancing the literacy agenda in the current global context, within which the recently adopted Sustainable Development Goals

[1] United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, Institute for Statistics, Fact Sheet No. 32, "Adult and youth literacy", September 2015. Available from www.uis.unesco.org/FactSheets/Pages/Literacy.aspx.

[2] Ibid., Fact Sheet No. 31, "A growing number of children and adolescents are out of school as aid fails to meet the mark", July 2015. Available from www.uis.unesco.org/Library/Documents/fs31-out-of-school-children-and-adolescents-en.pdf.

[3] UNESCO, *Education for All 2000-2015: Achievements and Challenges* (Paris, 2015).

are being pursued, by developing Member States' capacities in the five strategic axes of action for the period following the United Nations Literacy Decade, as identified in the Director-General's report on literacy for life: shaping future agendas (A/69/183) and endorsed by the Assembly.

5. The last section of the report includes information on the implementation of General Assembly resolution 69/268 on education for democracy, in which it called for an intensification of efforts to promote education for democracy and requested the Secretary-General, in cooperation with UNESCO, to report to the Assembly at its seventy-first session on the implementation of the resolution.

II. Advancing the global literacy agenda

6. The present report describes the coordinating and catalytic actions carried out by UNESCO since the sixty-ninth session of the General Assembly in the following five strategic axes of action for advancing the global literacy agenda:

(a) Developing the capacities of Member States in the areas of policies, programme delivery and literacy assessments;

(b) Scaling up literacy actions for girls and women;

(c) Reinforcing innovative modes of literacy delivery, including the use of information and communication technologies;

(d) Expanding the knowledge base and monitoring and evaluation;

(e) Advocating for literacy on the global agenda and ensuring synergies between different actions, including through a multi-stakeholder partnership and networks.

7. The present report is presented against the backdrop of the vision statement contained in General Assembly resolution 70/1, entitled "Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development", in which a world with universal literacy is envisaged as a part of the transformative and ambitious global agenda. While literacy is a driver for sustainable development, advancement in other areas of sustainable development creates an environment conducive to the acquisition, use and advancement of people's literacy skills. The Sustainable Development Goals therefore call for enhancing intersectoral cooperation to create synergies between literacy and other areas of development. Literacy is integral to all targets of Goal 4 on ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all, and youth and adult literacy is specifically addressed by target 4.6 and to a certain extent by target 4.4. The 2030 Agenda also reaffirms the need for a holistic approach to literacy — a continuum of proficiency levels — which is developed through formal, non-formal and informal learning throughout life in various social, cultural, political, economic and historical contexts. Moreover, the Goals recognize the universality of the literacy agenda.

8. Now is a defining moment in time, as the world embarks on a great collective journey to build a better future for all people in the next 15 years. It provides a renewed opportunity for the international community to act collaboratively to advance the global literacy agenda and strengthen the key foundation of that better future, especially for the millions who have not been able to achieve their full human potential.

9. The present report presents not only a snapshot of the literacy actions that UNESCO has been able to coordinate and catalyse, but also touches upon a new initiative that could potentially bring greater coherence in future actions, namely the Global Alliance for Literacy within the framework of lifelong learning. It was created in response to the General Assembly's request that UNESCO establish a multi-stakeholder partnership to ensure synergies between different actions.

A. Developing Member States' capacities in the area of policies, programme delivery and literacy assessments

10. UNESCO has been supporting some 40 countries in their efforts to enhance inclusive and gender-responsive policies and programmes and to build institutional and individual capacities in literacy. It has continued to support countries in developing literacy policies and implementing gender-responsive, contextually relevant literacy programmes.

11. The use of the principles of participatory and collaborative action research is an effective approach for developing high-quality, inclusive and innovative literacy education policies and programmes in multilingual and multicultural contexts. In 2015, UNESCO published a guidebook on this theme, which will be used for teacher training in bilingual education in at least 11 West African countries. It is also working with countries in francophone Africa to develop a harmonized curriculum for bilingual education and has already supported Senegal in developing a model for bilingual formal and non-formal basic education.

12. In South Sudan, UNESCO has been supporting the development of strategic plans for the implementation of national literacy policy; the establishment of 13 literacy centres in three states, Eastern Equatoria, Central Equatoria and Northern Bahr el Ghazal; and the training of literacy teachers.

13. Despite significant advances in expanding primary and secondary education, the Latin American and Caribbean region has 36 million young people and adults who have insufficient proficiency in literacy and basic skills (9 per cent of the population), of whom more than half are women. Of the total population with literacy challenges, 2.5 million are enrolled in literacy programmes (of whom more than 65 per cent are women), covering only 8 per cent of the potential demand. However, as a reflection of strong political will, various countries in the Latin American and Caribbean region made efforts to put appropriate literacy policies in place, link policies with broader national education and development policies and launch or strengthen national literacy campaigns. The following examples illustrate the commitment of the countries that have prioritized literacy in their national development efforts.

14. In Mexico, UNESCO, in partnership with the National Institute for Adult Education, has implemented a national campaign for literacy and for closing educational gaps, serving 7.5 million people over the age of 15, of whom 2.2 million will be taught literacy skills, 2.2 million will be able to complete primary education and 3.1 million will complete secondary education. Mexico has been strengthening the monitoring and evaluation system of this campaign with UNESCO support.

15. In the Dominican Republic, UNESCO supported the national literacy plan, "Quisqueya learns with you", which aims to teach literacy skills to more than 700,000 Dominicans. The programme has not only improved learners' proficiency in basic literacy and numeracy skills but has, in many cases, empowered them to start new businesses.

16. In Haiti, the Government is implementing a national literacy campaign directed at 300,000 Haitians by the end of 2016. With the support of UNESCO, the Government is developing a functional post-literacy curriculum and is about to launch a diagnostic study on the information system for the management of literacy, non-formal and adult education. This will be followed by a census of the population with literacy challenges in the country during the second half of 2016.

17. In Peru, the Ministry of Education conducted literacy initiatives for people who had not completed primary education. In 2014, a law was approved to establish reforms in education, as well as provisions for payment of those who deal with individuals aged 15 years or over with literacy challenges who did not complete primary education. In 2015, under the same law, standards and guidelines for the development of literacy and continuing education programmes were adopted, specifying the concept of literacy and continuing education for people over 15 years of age. In 2016, literacy and continuing education will be addressed in a joint approach by focusing efforts on specific districts of the country and implementing regional literacy projects in coordination with regional governments.

18. UNESCO has been working with a number of Arab countries to advance the literacy agenda. It has facilitated policy reviews in Egypt and the Sudan and supported the development of national literacy strategies in Iraq, Lebanon and Mauritania. It is also supporting the institutional development of the Regional Centre for Adult Education in Egypt, a category 2 centre under the auspices of UNESCO, and the training of trainers for the National Council for Literacy and Adult Education in the Sudan.

19. Almost 1 million people with insufficient literacy skills, the majority of whom are women and girls, were enrolled in Iraq's national literacy campaign. UNESCO piloted more than 135 community learning centres directed at vulnerable communities. Those centres have become a field-level resource for other development partners aiming to provide vulnerable individuals with various forms of relief and development aid. They have also served as a model for the more than 5,500 literacy centres instituted through the National Literacy Campaign. A network of more than 250 Iraqi civil society organizations was formed as the basis for the large-scale UNESCO capacity-building programme.

20. UNESCO is currently supporting the development of frameworks and resource materials for the recognition of non-formal learning in five Arab States. In order to reach unreached and underserved population groups, including refugees, UNESCO is promoting accelerated learning programmes and multi-grade teaching for the reintegration of out-of-school children into the formal system in Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic and community-based programmes in Egypt and Morocco.

B. Scaling up literacy actions for girls and women

21. UNESCO supported a number of countries in addressing the literacy learning needs of girls and women. It advocated for literacy, built strategic partnerships, facilitated resource mobilization and implemented targeted literacy programmes for girls and women. At the global level, UNESCO supported the campaign of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) on the occasion of the twentieth anniversary of the fourth World Conference on Women, jointly organized advocacy events and contributed to the gender-related aspects of the 2015 Education for All reviews. At the country level, gender mainstreaming in literacy has also been a clear priority, with particular attention paid to girls and women. UNESCO technical support at both the policy and programme levels have been extended in some countries, including Ethiopia, Nigeria, Pakistan, Senegal and the United Republic of Tanzania, under its Global Partnership for Girls' and Women's Education, known as "Better Life, Better Future".

22. In Senegal, the Literacy Project for Young Girls and Women is aimed at promoting girls' and women's empowerment and reducing poverty through literacy and the use of ICT. Altogether, 6,500 girls and women improved their literacy levels through 253 traditional literacy classes, while 3,000 girls and women participated in a mobile and computer-based training programme. Through an integrated approach, combining literacy with skills development, an additional 3,000 women developed their skills in sewing, hairdressing, farming and other vocations. The Project successfully piloted a remedial tutoring programme that enabled 1,900 girls with learning difficulties to complete primary school. Moreover, 60 lessons in the Wolof language were broadcast on national television and in 135 classrooms, and seven regional teacher training institutes were equipped with digital interactive resource kits called "Sankoré".

23. The United Republic of Tanzania is planning to address, through its "Empowering through Education" programme, the educational needs of adolescent girls and young women who drop out of school, usually because of cultural norms and practices, such as early marriage and teenage pregnancy, and non-conducive learning environments, ranging from gender-insensitive pedagogies to inadequate toilet and water supply facilities. This project builds on an earlier one that supported alternative learning opportunities for adolescent girls and young mothers who had dropped out of school and aimed to empower them by providing income-generating pre-vocational skills. The graduates established 10 income-generating groups and registered at the district level to qualify for loans for business creation. An open and distance learning centre has been established in which the use of self-learning modules has helped to increase a sense of confidence in the teenage mothers.

24. UNESCO has been supporting the establishment by implementing partners of adult literacy centres and community learning centres in Pakistan by addressing the learning needs of out-of-school girls and women. After five or six months of teaching, learners — including those with disabilities — were able to read, write and do simple calculations. Rural communities were actively involved in literacy centres and learners were keen to acquire income-generating skills. Advocacy sessions were conducted in the community learning centres for the learners on the themes of child and maternal health, agriculture and livestock as well as gender equality. The ultimate aim was to empower the rural women and girls.

25. Reintegrating young girls and adolescents, especially from indigenous groups, into the education system through innovative approaches and technologies has been an important focus of the UNESCO contribution in scaling up literacy actions in Latin America. For example, in Guatemala, more than 300 students, particularly indigenous girls, have re-entered educational activities, benefiting from the programme of adult education, which offers flexible learning conditions. An increase of 25 per cent in the coverage of the programme was reported by the Ministry of Education in 2015.

C. Reinforcing innovative modes of literacy delivery through information and communications technology and other means

26. In rapidly changing societies, economies and environments, innovation is essential for ensuring that everyone can benefit from meaningful learning opportunities to continue to acquire, use and advance literacy skills. Quests for innovation include efforts to harness the potential of ICT for the expanded provision of quality learning opportunities, while ICT skills are increasingly perceived as part of literacy.

27. The UNESCO Confucius Prize for Literacy and the King Sejong Literacy Prize continue to be effective instruments for promoting and rewarding innovative practices. In 2015, five outstanding programmes from Chile, Madagascar, Mozambique, Slovakia and Sri Lanka were awarded the prizes.

28. UNESCO is also promoting innovation in the use of ICT for literacy as part of its annual Mobile Learning Week conference, which provides a global platform from which to advance understanding of the potential of mobile technology and its effective application for promoting education, including literacy and literate environments. For instance, the 2016 Mobile Learning Week focused on innovation for quality and pointed to a number of ways to harness technologies to enhance access to literacy programmes.[4]

29. UNESCO initiated projects for improved literacy teaching and learning with the support of Microsoft and Pearson Publishing. The partnership with Microsoft focuses on the design and implementation of solutions that harness the potential of emerging technologies, such as mobile and cloud technologies, to address existing limitations of time and place and expand access to quality literacy learning opportunities. The project covers four countries, Bangladesh, Egypt, Ethiopia and Mexico. The partnership with Pearson is aimed at harnessing innovative ICT resources and solutions for improving literacy in the context of the Sustainable Development Goals. The initiative will carry out investigations, share information about innovative cases and develop guidelines and scenarios to inform the work of governments, the private sector and non-profit organizations.

30. Furthermore, UNESCO has fostered the innovative use of technologies to provide quality literacy learning opportunities in local languages. For example, it encouraged the use of interactive whiteboards and local language modules in teacher training and literacy classes in Cabo Verde, the Gambia and Guinea-Bissau. UNESCO implemented a pilot project in Pakistan to develop a mobile-based post-literacy programme in which newly literate learners receive post-literacy materials

[4] See www.unesco.org/new/en/mlw.

as messages on a mobile phone and read and respond to them. The learners receive text messages three times a day, read them, practise in their workbooks and report back to literacy centres. About 800 messages have been developed on 17 different topics, including religion, health, general knowledge and history. A different approach was adopted in Thailand's Karaoke Literacy Programme, in which a simple music device and projector were used to promote literacy among young people and adults belonging to ethnic minorities.

31. UNESCO has supported initiatives that enable out-of-school children and youth to gain access to high-quality learning resources. One such programme is the Mobile Literacy for Out-of-School Children project in Thailand, implemented by the Ministry of Education in partnership with Microsoft and True Corporation, that aims to enhance the basic literacy and numeracy skills of 4,000 learners and train 100 teachers. To that end, 400 tablets loaded with an application containing learning materials in three languages, Thai, Burmese and Karen, have been distributed to 20 migrant learning centres and community learning centres along the Thailand-Myanmar border, covering at least 1,440 learners (with 4 learners sharing one tablet) as well as 40 teachers. All migrant learning centres and community learning centres are furnished with Internet and satellite television equipment, including educational channels. Another programme addressing similar needs involves the development of Arabic literacy software for out-of-school children in the Sudan.

32. UNESCO believes that open and distance learning and digital learning resources can create new frontiers of learning, especially for women in difficult circumstances. In this perspective, UNESCO is joining the United Nations country team in Thailand to collaborate with institutions such as Sukhothai Thammathirat Open University to develop an online skill development course for Muslim widows in southern Thailand. UNESCO also supported Guatemala in the development of an e-literacy tool, Saqarib'al, in the Spanish, Maya-Mam and Maya-Kiche languages, enhancing access for young men and women to the means of acquiring reading and writing skills.

D. Expanding the knowledge base and monitoring and evaluation

33. UNESCO has been expanding the knowledge base on literacy through research, publications, newsletters, databases, the UNESCO Chairs programmes and prizes and other means. For example, the Effective Literacy and Numeracy Practices Database (LitBase) was used by more than 320,000 persons during 2015, including more than 800 researchers, and continues to provide 200 case studies of successful and promising approaches to literacy teaching and learning for youth and adults.

34. UNESCO has also published compilations on selected themes relevant to practitioners and policymakers. For example, recent studies have focused on intergenerational approaches to literacy, literacy for sustainable development, gender equality and use of ICT.

35. Two other publications that map global trends and look at possible future directions are a research paper entitled "The evolution and impact of literacy campaigns and programmes, 2000-2014",[5] which outlines global trends in the development and implementation of adult literacy campaigns and programmes since

[5] Available from http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0023/002341/234154e.pdf.

2000, and a special issue of the *International Review of Education — Journal of Lifelong Learning* on lifelong literacy that sought to unpack the literacy target of Sustainable Development Goal 4 from a lifelong-learning perspective.

36. UNESCO has designed and implemented several research projects in collaboration with a number of partners including the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the International Fund for Agricultural Development, to respond to knowledge gaps for the advancement of literacy in the lifelong-learning perspective. This research provides key findings on a range of issues, including: (a) developing a literate environment; (b) addressing the learning needs of out-of-school children; (c) understanding ways of enhancing knowledge and skills for agriculture and improving rural livelihoods; (d) creating strategies to expand mobile reading; (e) recognition, validation and accreditation of prior and acquired basic knowledge and skills; (f) literacy and gender, especially relating to girls and women; and (g) literacy learning in multilingual contexts. The first UNESCO Chair on adult literacy and learning for social transformation, established at the University of East Anglia (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland) in 2016, is another means of advancing innovative research and capacity development, connecting universities and research institutes in developed and developing countries.

37. UNESCO is supporting countries in following up on important recommendations for literacy action in the Belém Framework for Action, adopted at the Sixth International Conference on Adult Education, held in 2009. UNESCO launched the Observatory for Adult Education in Latin America and the Caribbean to generate knowledge and collaborative studies and to serve as a platform for dialogue among governments and local, national, regional and international institutions. It also worked with eight countries in the Latin American and Caribbean region to develop criteria for a quality curriculum for the education of young people and adults in the region.

38. In respect of monitoring literacy progress and measuring literacy and numeracy skills, the UNESCO Institute for Statistics has continued to be the major source of literacy data, providing annual updates of literacy statistics, while the Education for All Global Monitoring Reports (2013/14 and 2015) offered an assessment of the world's progress towards the six Education for All goals. National Education for All reviews for 2000-2015 conducted in nearly 130 countries offered another opportunity to take stock. The third Global Report on Adult Learning and Education is to be launched on International Literacy Day 2016 (8 September).

39. The youth and adult literacy rates for the population aged 15-24 years and 15 years and older, respectively, and the number of illiterate adults and young people are long-established indicators for the measurement of literacy. National data on literacy are typically collected with household surveys or population censuses, relying mostly on the definition of literacy as "the ability to read and write, with understanding, a short, simple statement about one's everyday life", which divides the population into two groups — literate and illiterate.[6] Recognizing the limitations of these literacy measures, and in response to General Assembly resolution 69/141, efforts for the further development and sophistication of statistical literacy

[6] *Principles and Recommendations for Population and Housing Censuses: Revision 2* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.07.XVII.8). Available from http://unstats.un.org/unsd/publication/seriesm/seriesm_67rev2e.pdf.

information have been based on an understanding of literacy as a continuum of proficiency levels, rather than a binary classification, within and beyond the context of monitoring of implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. The monitoring framework reflects this shift, setting the indicator for target 4.6 as the percentage of the population in a given age group achieving at least a fixed level of proficiency in functional literacy and numeracy skills, for which an enhancement of the direct measurement of literacy skills is required.

40. Conventional literacy statistics are also being elaborated. In addition to the youth and adult literacy rates, the UNESCO Institute for Statistics has recently begun to publish an elderly literacy rate for persons aged 65 years and older. As at June 2016, UNESCO had data on literacy rates in the population aged 25-64 years. In combination with the youth and elderly literacy rate, this indicator will allow a comparison of basic reading and writing skills in three distinct, non-overlapping age groups. To respond to the focus on equity in the Sustainable Development Goals and the call for more disaggregated data in General Assembly resolution 69/141, UNESCO also plans to disseminate literacy rates for urban and rural areas separately, in addition to literacy rates for women, men and both sexes combined.

41. Against this backdrop, UNESCO is proposing to consult Member States on the development of appropriate literacy assessment strategies that enable more accurate monitoring of improvement in literacy proficiency levels in a population.

42. For most developed countries, information on the literacy and numeracy of adults is available from the Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies for 25 countries, created by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), and its predecessors, the International Adult Literacy Survey and the Adult Literacy and Life Skills Survey. Additional information is available from the Skills Toward Employment and Productivity programme of the World Bank; this incorporates items from the Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies and was implemented in 13 countries in 2010.

43. Most middle-income and least developed countries do not participate in large-scale assessment programmes with cross-country comparability. Estimates of youth and adult literacy in those countries often rely on a self-assessment of literacy skills in national population censuses, sample surveys or other measures, such as data on educational attainment. More countries, however, are conducting national adult literacy assessments using larger household surveys and literacy-specific surveys.[7] UNESCO is currently responding to requests from three Member States — the Islamic Republic of Iran, Kenya and Saint Lucia — for support in conducting national literacy surveys. There are at least two major challenges. The first is to reconcile the need for a country-driven, contextually relevant assessment process and an internationally comparable data set. The second challenge lies in defining skills and proficiency levels so that they are relevant for all countries across the globe, given the universal nature of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

44. It is encouraging to recognize increasing efforts to conduct literacy assessments and the potential of national adult literacy and citizen-led assessments for improving the effectiveness of policies as well as teaching and learning for literacy. There are several challenges, however, in monitoring the achievement of

[7] *Education for All 2000-2015: achievements and challenges*.

Sustainable Development Goal targets related to proficiency in literacy and numeracy, including:

(a) Development of a consensus on the definitions of literacy and numeracy;

(b) Development of measures and appropriate reporting categories that have cross-cultural and cross-language validity;

(c) Design and implementation of a cost-effective operational model that would allow the use of valid and reliable assessments for monitoring progress and achieving measurable targets;

(d) Ensuring adequate institutional and individual capacities for data management and measurement of literacy skills.

45. To address these challenges and monitor Sustainable Development Goal target 4.6, UNESCO is collaborating with OECD to develop an international assessment framework for measuring the literacy levels of the population and a set of tools to link the new assessment with existing cross-national assessments and instruments to assess the skills of the population.

46. At the country level, efforts were made to enhance national information systems for managing non-formal education or integrated education management information systems in Bangladesh, Cambodia, Chad, Mauritania, Nepal and Rwanda. In Iraq, work was done on the development of a literacy data collection system to be streamlined with the larger education management information system. In Nigeria, non-formal education data were streamlined and discrepancies resolved, and three nationally accepted data collection instruments for state and local government and for centres were developed.

47. UNESCO is supporting Member States in the development of cost-effective tools for programme evaluation, primarily through the programme Action Research: Measuring Literacy Programme Participants' Learning Outcomes. The programme responds to the need of policymakers to measure learning outcomes through a common reference framework. It seeks to capture the proficiency levels and the actual performance of learners completing courses from different literacy programmes. The aim is to provide policymakers and development partners with reliable and contextualized data, which will be used to improve the quality of literacy programmes for youth and adults, strengthen evidence-based advocacy and develop national capacities with an emphasis on ownership and sustainability. The tools developed in the first phase of the programme have been used by the five participating countries, Burkina Faso, Mali, Morocco, the Niger and Senegal, to improve the existing programmes. Seven more countries, Benin, Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Togo, have shown interest in the programme and have joined the second phase.

E. Advocating for literacy on the global agenda and ensuring synergies between different actions through multi-stakeholder partnerships and networks and other means

48. UNESCO, in partnership with other co-conveners[8] of the 2015 World Education Forum, ensured that literacy forms an integral part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, encapsulated in Sustainable Development Goal 4 on ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all.

49. UNESCO played catalytic and coordination roles in drafting a new normative instrument, the Recommendation on Adult Learning and Education, which was adopted at the thirty-eighth session of the General Conference of UNESCO in November 2015. Replacing the 1976 Recommendation on the Development of Adult Education to reflect current educational, cultural, political, social and economic challenges, the new Recommendation provides a more detailed definition of adult learning and education, within which basic literacy skills are one of the three core areas, along with continuing training and professional development and promotion of active citizenship.

50. Another example of the UNESCO coordination role is the annual celebration of International Literacy Day across the world. In 2014 and 2015, the Day focused on literacy and sustainable development. Events organized in a number of countries, including Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Cambodia, Chile, Cuba, Ethiopia, France, Ghana, Mozambique, Nepal, New Zealand, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, the Sudan, Swaziland and Thailand, contributed to raising the profile of literacy.

51. In 2016, International Literacy Day marks its fiftieth anniversary. On 26 October 1966, the General Conference of UNESCO, at its fourteenth session, proclaimed 8 September as International Literacy Day to remind the international community of the importance of literacy for individuals, communities and societies and the need for intensified efforts towards more literate societies.

52. In 2014, a major global celebration took place in Bangladesh, when the Government, in partnership with UNESCO, organized the International Conference on Girls' and Women's Literacy and Education in support of the United Nations Secretary-General's Global Education First Initiative. The Dhaka Declaration, adopted during the International Conference, served as a reminder for the global community of the importance of literacy as a driver for sustainable development, focusing on girls and women.

53. In 2015, UNESCO organized a global meeting in Paris, shedding light on the connection between literacy and different areas of sustainable development. The Paris Communiqué on Literacy and Sustainable Societies, adopted at the meeting, not only advanced the 2030 vision of literacy and supported the creation of the Global Alliance for Literacy within the framework of lifelong learning, but also highlighted key areas of future action to ensure sustained collective efforts towards a more literate world.

[8] The other co-conveners are the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, UNICEF, the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Population Fund, UN-Women and the World Bank. The International Labour Organization recently joined the co-conveners' group.

54. The UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities is yet another platform that creates opportunities to reinforce literacy action at local levels. As more cities join the Network, UNESCO will work with Member States and local governments to enhance literacy-learning opportunities as a key step towards building learning cities.

55. At the global level, UNESCO played its coordination and catalytic role in scaling up literacy efforts in the period following the United Nations Literacy Decade (2003-2012). As a follow-up to the final evaluation of the Decade, presented at the sixty-eighth session of the General Assembly, in 2013, the UNESCO report (A/69/183) was submitted to the Assembly at its sixty-ninth session, proposing the five strategic axes of action for the post-Decade era. This led to the adoption of resolution 69/141, sponsored by 81 countries, which sent a strong signal to the global community regarding Member States' renewed commitment to literacy, the need for intensified collective efforts through an effective multi-stakeholder partnership and the role of UNESCO. The need for UNESCO to play coordination and catalytic roles and the idea of an effective multi-stakeholder partnership were also endorsed by the UNESCO General Conference at its thirty-seventh session, in 2013.

56. In response to the call by the United Nations and the General Conference, the UNESCO Secretariat has been engaged in a series of consultations with key stakeholders over the past two years. The proposal for an effective multi-stakeholder partnership was broadly accepted by participants of the two major events held on the occasion of the celebrations of International Literacy Day in 2014 and 2015, in Bangladesh and Paris, respectively.

57. UNESCO has decided to establish the Global Alliance for Literacy within the framework of lifelong learning as a thematic partnership that will help Member States make faster progress in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, since literacy plays a direct and indirect role in many of the Sustainable Development Goals. The Alliance, composed of a group of willing and committed partners (countries, regional entities, donors, the private sector, civil society organizations, foundations, associations, experts and others), will work to improve literacy for sustainable development.

58. The Alliance will stimulate and promote collaborative programmes that connect literacy with the sustainable development agenda within a lifelong and life-wide approach.

F. Recommendations on future action on literacy for life

59. **On the basis of the present report on literacy for life, the following recommendations may be considered by the General Assembly:**

(a) **Recognize literacy as a part of the right to education, as it brings distinct benefits of a human, political, social, economic and cultural nature for individuals and societies, and as a development accelerator contributing to the realization of an equitable, inclusive and sustainable world;**

(b) **Call upon Governments to scale up literacy programmes for children, youth and adults, with particular attention given to disadvantaged and marginalized groups, including girls, women, indigenous peoples, persons**

with disabilities and children and youth and adults in humanitarian emergencies, to foster the innovative delivery of literacy services, through technology and a strengthened institutional network and other means, to promote an intersectoral approach by linking literacy learning with sectors such as health, social welfare, labour, industry and agriculture, to address diverse learning needs through relevant learning materials in different languages, to establish multi-stakeholder partnerships with the active participation of civil society and the private sector, and to monitor progress by collecting, analysing and using data to enhance programme and policy effectiveness;

(c) Encourage United Nations organizations, multilateral and bilateral donors, regional organizations, civil society, academia and the private sector to continue their collective efforts for the promotion of literacy and literate environments and to contribute to shaping the Global Alliance for Literacy within the framework of lifelong learning into an effective platform for synergistic action at global, regional, national and community levels;

(d) Call upon UNESCO to continue to play a coordinating and catalytic role by implementing the recommendations of the Alliance and to continue to support Member States, in collaboration with partners, in enhancing capacities for policy formulation, programme implementation, monitoring and evaluation as well as sharing information and knowledge on policies, programmes and progress in the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal targets connected with literacy, especially target 4.6 on youth and adult literacy, and creating synergies of action between the Alliance and other initiatives, including the Global Partnership for Girls' and Women's Education and the Global Network of Learning Cities.

III. Education for democracy

60. The developments described below relate to the implementation of resolution 69/268 on education for democracy. The links between human rights, democracy and development are well established and have been made even more explicit in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Education for democracy assumes particular importance if the purpose of education itself is taken to be to nurture responsible and active citizens capable of contributing effectively to the advancement, peace and prosperity of their societies.

61. While the concept of education for democracy is generally understood as creating active, law-abiding, conscious citizens, a survey of the literature, policies, programmes and curricular materials related to education for democracy reveals that its practical application faces several difficulties: (a) there is no single, universally agreed-upon definition of democracy, nor are its current manifestations necessarily accepted as an ideal; (b) it is wide-ranging and includes or overlaps with many other programmes, such as human rights education, global citizenship education, education for sustainable development, peace education, civic education and the like; (c) the close connection between democracy, good governance, leadership, human rights, national identity, freedom of expression, peace, security, inclusiveness, minority rights, culture and religion makes the topic extremely sensitive in all societies because it examines power relationships and challenges the

status quo and established interests; and (d) there is growing disillusionment with, and lack of trust in, the institutions that are to be upheld by education for democracy.

62. These challenges call for a shift in educational practices to prepare learners, both in and out of school, both youth and adults, for a lifelong process of social innovation to shape new forms of social organization. Education for democracy must therefore be embedded in social action and its practices should emerge from a continuous process of action and reflection.

63. However, some elements of programmes and curricula can be identified from current practice. They revolve around the development of core capabilities thought to be important for participating effectively in a democracy and bringing about social change. These include cognitive capacities related to generating, analysing and using knowledge, expressing thoughts with clarity, understanding principles and applying them; moral capacities related to personal integrity, commitment to justice or fairness, trustworthiness, perseverance and the like; capacities relating to cooperation, collective action and decision-making, collective leadership, conflict resolution, peacebuilding, inclusiveness, appreciation of cultural diversity; and capacities related to objective, humble and systematic learning from action in the context of service to the community.

64. Those capacities can be acquired only in action and in a conducive environment. Thus, in formal education, attention must be paid to role modelling by teachers and by the school system. In non-formal settings, opportunities must be provided in the form of community-based processes or projects for learning the attitudes and skills of democracy.

65. The range and number of formal and informal activities that can be classified as education for democracy are vast. Included here are a few illustrations of the kinds of action taken by United Nations agencies globally to promote education for democracy in schools and in the community at large, as well as initiatives of Member States.

66. UNESCO promotes global citizenship education through global and regional advocacy initiatives, as well as the provision of policy guidance and curriculum development. It also supports media and information literacy to prepare citizens to participate in political, democratic and social life inside and outside the formal education system, as well as countering intolerance. Finally, it promotes the development of knowledge and practices that foster respect for human rights, philosophy and intercultural dialogue, with particular emphasis on fighting racism, discrimination, extremism, radicalization and the manipulation of cultural and religious identities in order to achieve a culture of peace and democracy. The UNESCO Associated Schools Project Network operates as a key mechanism for embedding democratic principles in the classroom, school governance, student participation and leadership and project management.

67. The United Nations Democracy Fund supports projects to develop action plans for democracy and human rights education and reduce educational inequalities and exclusion, empowering youth, particularly women, to analyse information, develop leadership skills and participate in decision-making processes in a safe environment. Human rights and democracy education for illiterate rural women and young people, as well as ICT, are tools for promoting active citizenship.

68. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights is promoting and coordinating the ongoing World Programme for Human Rights Education, assisting Member States in national implementation and developing and disseminating human rights training and educational materials and methodologies based on good practices.

69. Education for democracy is embedded in the support provided by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) for local governance, decentralization, resilience, national dialogue and elections as well as in UNICEF local governance action addressing women's participation and child-related issues within a large number of initiatives worldwide.

70. Examples of initiatives taken by Member States as well as specific supportive initiatives of United Nations agencies are grouped below by region.

71. In the Arab States, education for democracy has operated largely out of the formal school system, focusing on channelling the energies of youth towards constructive aims, bringing women more prominently into public life, helping communities mobilize around local governance issues, stimulating access to information and a constructive role for the mass media and fostering national dialogues on key societal issues. In response to the Syrian crisis, in particular, UNDP has sought to strengthen the capacity of individuals, communities and institutions to respond creatively to emergencies, reinforcing habits of tolerance, collaboration and peacebuilding and opening new pathways for local democratic governance, dialogue, collaboration, service, openness, participation and spaces for sharing and discussion.

72. Most of the activities in the Asia-Pacific region focus on global citizenship education, peace education, human rights education and dialogue on the mass media and freedom of information. A number of activities have targeted the training of teachers and educators and aim at empowering young people to become active contributors to building peaceful and sustainable societies, using information and communications technology. Good practices have also been established to promote learning to live together and the well-being of learners in education systems in different countries of the region.

73. In Europe and North America, issues such as inequality, loss of trust in institutions, nationalism and xenophobia are at the core of education for democracy. These challenges require considerable changes at individual and societal levels. Efforts in this region therefore focus on raising awareness of global interdependence and sustainable development and empowering individuals to make more responsible daily choices and engage in the required changes.

74. The Latin American and Caribbean region is where the most progress is being made in terms of the systematic and innovative incorporation of education for democracy into school curricula, national policies and the development of curricula on human rights education, learning to live together, ethics, aesthetics and citizenship, as well as the establishment of reference centres on human rights education and the development of materials. The Caribbean countries are less active than the Latin American countries in this area, notwithstanding valuable initiatives at the regional and subregional levels.

75. In sub-Saharan Africa, education for democracy programmes focus on the development of related approaches, such as education for a culture of peace, global

citizenship education and education for sustainable development, which promote values of peace, human rights, democracy, respect for religious and cultural diversity and justice, and are increasingly reflected in national curricula.

76. In view of the foregoing, it should be noted that education for democracy has already been implemented in national education systems (formal and non-formal) in all regions of the world under different headings and through different topics, including education on democratic and governance processes, citizenship, civics education, human rights and fundamental freedoms, peace, intercultural dialogue and the like. Following the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals, which explicitly include governance issues and call for socioeconomic transformation of individuals and societies, efforts should be made to promote, implement and integrate education for democracy in a more coherent way.